

## Challenges of National Youth Policy Implementation in Northwestern Ethiopia

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### Abstract

This study examined the challenges affecting the implementation of the National Youth Policy in Bahir Dar City, Ethiopia. A concurrent nested mixed methods was employed by integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches. Quantitative data were collected from 363 respondents drawn from youth and social affairs offices, youth associations, and youth leagues using structured questionnaires. Qualitative data were generated through 15 key informant interviews and two focus group discussions involving regional and city-level stakeholders. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data were analyzed through thematic content analysis. The findings revealed that youth policy implementation is hindered by interconnected institutional, organizational, financial, and governance-related challenges. The most significant barriers include weak leadership commitment, poor organizational structure, inadequate budget allocation, unclear practical task assignment, weak coordination among policy actors, and limited institutional capacity. The study further found that inadequate dissemination, limited policy training, and weak inter-sectoral collaboration have constrained its effective translation into practice. The study concludes that effective youth policy implementation requires strengthened institutional arrangements, sustained political commitment, enhanced coordination mechanisms, improved human and financial resource allocation, and continuous policy revision aligned with the evolving needs of young people. The findings contribute to broader policy implementation debates in developing countries, particularly regarding cross-sectorial governance and institutional effectiveness.

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## Introduction

Youth policies have increasingly become central instruments for promoting inclusive development, democratic participation, social cohesion, and economic transformation (Corrigan, 2016; Commonwealth, 2016). Across the world, governments recognize that young people constitute both a strategic national resource and a vulnerable social category requiring targeted policy interventions. In developing countries, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, youth populations represent a substantial demographic group whose productive engagement is essential for sustainable development (UN, 2018). Consequently, national youth policies are expected to address unemployment, social exclusion, political marginalization, educational inequality, and limited access to social services.

Globally, youth policy has evolved into a multidimensional and cross-sectorial policy domain involving education, employment, health, governance, security, recreation, and civic participation (Dibou, 2012). International organizations such as the United Nations, UNICEF, and the World Health Organization have consistently emphasized the importance of youth development and youth participation in policy processes. The adoption of the World Programme of Action for Youth and the Sustainable Development Goals further strengthened the global policy focus on youth inclusion and empowerment (UN, 2018).

In Africa, youth policy implementation remains a major governance challenge despite the existence of numerous national policy frameworks. While many governments have introduced youth-oriented policies and programs, implementation outcomes often remain weak due to institutional fragmentation, inadequate resources, weak coordination mechanisms, limited political commitment, and governance-related constraints (Tembo, 2021; Matsieli, 2014). Existing scholarship demonstrates that successful policy implementation depends not only on policy formulation but also on institutional capacity, organizational structures, stakeholder coordination, accountability systems, and leadership commitment (Peters, 2014; Signé, 2017).

Scholarly debates on policy implementation emphasize competing perspectives regarding the causes of implementation failure. Top-down theorists argue that implementation success depends primarily on clear policy goals, hierarchical control, and administrative compliance (Van Meter & Van Horn, 1975). In contrast, bottom-up scholars emphasize the role of local implementers, contextual realities, and street-level bureaucracies in shaping policy outcomes (Lipsky, 2010). Institutional governance perspectives further argue that implementation effectiveness is strongly influenced by organizational arrangements, coordination systems, and political-administrative environments

(Peters, 2018). These theoretical debates demonstrate that policy implementation is inherently complex and shaped by multiple interacting factors.

In Ethiopia, the National Youth Policy was introduced in 2004 to address the socio-economic and political challenges facing young people (Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture, 2004). The policy aimed to enhance youth participation, employment opportunities, social development, and national integration. Since then, different institutional arrangements have been established to operationalize youth development activities at federal, regional, and local levels.

Despite these efforts, young people in Ethiopia continue to face significant challenges, including unemployment, limited participation in decision-making, inadequate access to services, weak institutional support, and insufficient recreational and development infrastructures (Amhara Region Plan Commission, 2016). In the Amhara National Regional State, these challenges remain highly visible, particularly in urban areas where youth unemployment and social vulnerability are increasing.

Although previous studies have examined youth-related issues in Ethiopia, limited empirical attention has been given to the institutional and governance-related challenges affecting youth policy implementation. Existing studies largely focus on youth unemployment, political participation, or social problems, while implementation processes remain underexplored. Consequently, there is insufficient empirical evidence explaining why the National Youth Policy has not achieved its intended outcomes at local implementation levels.

This study therefore aimed to assess the major challenges affecting the implementation of the National Youth Policy in Bahir Dar City Administration. Specifically, the study examined institutional, organizational, financial, leadership, and coordination-related barriers affecting policy implementation. By doing so, the study contributes to broader policy implementation debates in developing-country contexts and provides evidence-based recommendations for improving youth policy governance in Ethiopia.

## Literature Review

### Conceptualizing Youth Policy

Youth policy refers to a coordinated framework of governmental strategies, programs, and interventions designed to address the social, economic, political, and developmental needs of young people. It serves as a guiding instrument for allocating resources, coordinating institutions, and promoting youth development outcomes. According to Corrigan (2016), youth policy is

inherently cross-sectorial because youth-related concerns cut across education, employment, health, governance, culture, and security.

Modern youth policy approaches emphasize youth empowerment, participation, and inclusion rather than viewing young people merely as beneficiaries of social protection programs. Contemporary policy frameworks increasingly recognize youth as active development actors capable of contributing to economic growth, democratic governance, and social transformation.

### **Theoretical Perspectives on Policy Implementation**

This study was guided by top-down, bottom-up, and institutional governance theories of policy implementation. Top-down implementation theory emphasizes the importance of clear policy objectives, strong leadership, administrative control, and hierarchical coordination. Scholars such as Van Meter and Van Horn (1975) argue that policy implementation succeeds when policy goals are clearly communicated and supported by adequate institutional arrangements. Similarly, Kerr (1976) emphasized that successful policies require consistent implementation structures and administrative commitment.

Bottom-up perspectives challenge hierarchical implementation assumptions by emphasizing the role of local actors and implementers. Lipsky (2010) argues that street-level bureaucrats play a critical role in shaping policy outcomes because they interpret and operationalize policy directives within practical contexts. Paudel (2009) further notes that implementation outcomes are strongly influenced by local realities, institutional practices, and implementers' capacities.

Institutional governance theories further emphasize the role of organizational structures, coordination mechanisms, institutional arrangements, and political environments in determining implementation outcomes. Peters (2014) argues that implementation effectiveness largely depends on institutional capacity and governance structures. Likewise, McConnell (2010) explains that successful policy implementation requires effective institutional alignment, resource mobilization, and accountability systems. These theoretical perspectives collectively informed the interpretation of implementation challenges identified in this study.

### **Empirical Literature on Youth Policy Implementation**

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## **Empirical Literature on Youth Policy Implementation**

Studies conducted in Africa and other developing regions consistently identify weak institutional capacity, inadequate financial resources, poor coordination, unclear responsibilities, and weak leadership commitment as major barriers to effective youth policy implementation.

Tembo (2021) found that inadequate dissemination of policy frameworks and limited stakeholder awareness constrained youth policy implementation in Zambia. Similarly, Matsieli (2014) reported that institutional fragmentation and insufficient resources negatively affected youth policy implementation in Lesotho.

In Ethiopia, existing studies indicate that youth-focused programs often suffer from poor coordination, inadequate accountability systems, and limited political commitment. However, many studies focus primarily on youth unemployment and political participation rather than implementation processes. Consequently, there remains a significant research gap regarding institutional and governance-related implementation challenges.

## **Research Gap**

Although several studies have examined youth development issues in Ethiopia and Africa, limited empirical research specifically investigates the institutional, organizational, and governance challenges affecting youth policy implementation at local government levels. Furthermore, little research has integrated quantitative and qualitative evidence to comprehensively examine implementation dynamics in the Ethiopian context. This study addresses this gap

by examining the implementation challenges of the National Youth Policy in Bahir Dar City Administration using a mixed-methods approach.

## **METHODS AND MATERIALS**

This study employed a concurrent nested mixed-methods research design integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative component constituted the primary method for assessing the prevalence of implementation challenges, while qualitative data were embedded to provide contextual and institutional explanations. The mixed-methods approach was selected because youth policy implementation involves complex governance and institutional dynamics that cannot adequately be explained using a single research approach.

The study was conducted in Bahir Dar City Administration, Amhara National Regional State, Ethiopia. The target population included employees of youth and social affairs offices, youth association executives, and youth league executives. The total target population consisted of 2,093 employees and 644 youth executives. A combination of cluster sampling, proportional sampling, and purposive sampling techniques was employed. Bahir Dar City Administration consists of 40 kebeles, among which 14 kebeles were selected proportionally from six sub-cities. In addition, three surrounding kebeles - Meshenti, Tis Abay, and Zegie were purposively selected due to their relevance to the contexts of youth policy implementation. Consequently, the final study encompassed 17 kebeles.

A total of 377 respondents were targeted for the quantitative survey, of which 363 valid responses were obtained. For the qualitative component, 15 key informants from federal, regional, and city-level institutions participated in interviews, while two focus group discussions involving 14 participants were conducted.

Data were collected using structured questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and focus group discussion guides. The questionnaire included demographic items and Likert-scale questions measuring implementation challenges. To ensure validity and reliability, the instruments were reviewed by experts and pilot-tested before data collection. Reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha produced coefficients above 0.80, indicating strong internal consistency. Construct validity was also examined through factor analysis.

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages with the support of SPSS version 25. Qualitative data obtained from interviews and focus group discussions were analyzed using thematic content analysis involving coding, theme development, interpretation, and synthesis.

## Findings of the Study

This section presents the key findings on challenges affecting the implementation of the National Youth Policy in Bahir Dar City Administration. The findings are presented using an integrated analysis of quantitative survey data, key informant interviews, and focus group discussions. The results are organized around major thematic areas that emerged from both datasets. The analysis is guided by policy implementation theories, particularly the top-down, bottom-up, and institutional governance perspectives, which emphasize leadership, organizational capacity, coordination, and clarity of policy goals as critical determinants of implementation effectiveness.

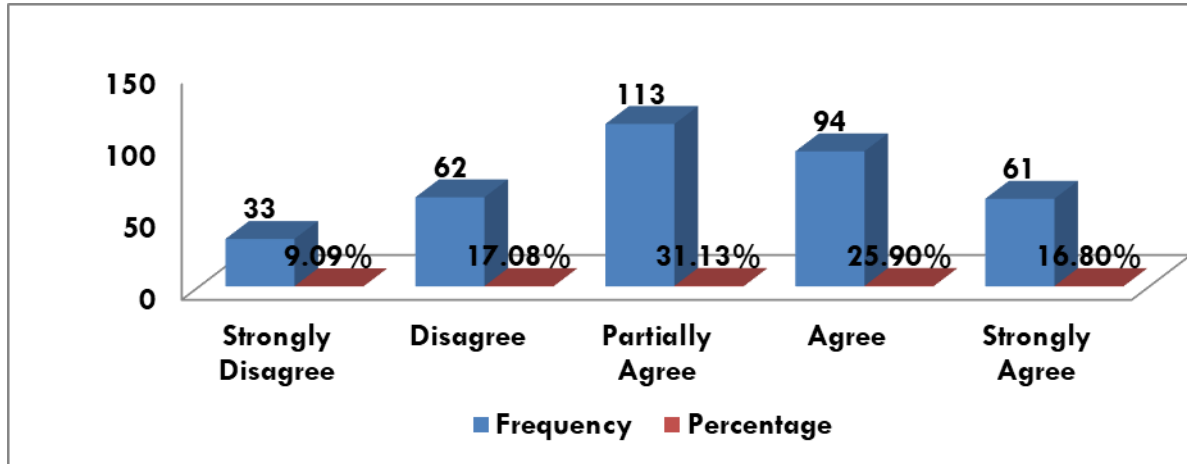
### Lack of leadership Commitment

Figure 1 presents respondents' perceptions regarding the poor commitment of leadership in the implementation process. The findings indicate that a considerable proportion of respondents perceived leadership commitment as inadequate. Specifically, 113 respondents (31.13%) partially agreed that poor leadership commitment existed, while 94 respondents (25.90%) agreed and 61 respondents (16.80%) strongly agreed. In contrast, 62 respondents (17.08%) disagreed and 33 respondents (9.09%) strongly disagreed with the statement.

Qualitative findings strongly support this result. The majority of key informants, 12 (80%), emphasized that policy actors demonstrate limited commitment to translating the youth policy into actionable programs and practical interventions. Similarly, focus group discussion participants reported weak leadership engagement in the monitoring, evaluation, and coordination of youth-related activities. These findings suggest that inadequate leadership commitment has constrained effective policy implementation by weakening institutional accountability, reducing follow-up mechanisms, and limiting coordinated efforts among responsible stakeholders.

**Figure 1**

*Lack of Leadership Commitment*



*Note.* Data obtained from field survey, 2025

**Poor Organizational Structure**

Figure 2 presents respondents’ perceptions regarding the organizational structure of the youth sector. The findings reveal that the majority of respondents perceived the organizational structure as weak and ineffective. Specifically, 112 respondents (30.85%) agreed and 87 respondents (23.97%) strongly agreed that the youth sector suffers from a poor organizational structure. In addition, 83 respondents (22.87%) partially agreed with the statement. Conversely, 66 respondents (18.18%) disagreed, while only 15 respondents (4.13%) strongly disagreed.

Interview participants further indicated that frequent institutional restructuring created instability within the youth sector. According to the participants, the sector was repeatedly reorganized under different ministries and bureaus, which weakened institutional continuity, reduced accountability, and undermined organizational memory. Participants also emphasized that inconsistencies in organizational structures between federal and regional levels created coordination challenges, role ambiguity, and confusion during policy implementation.

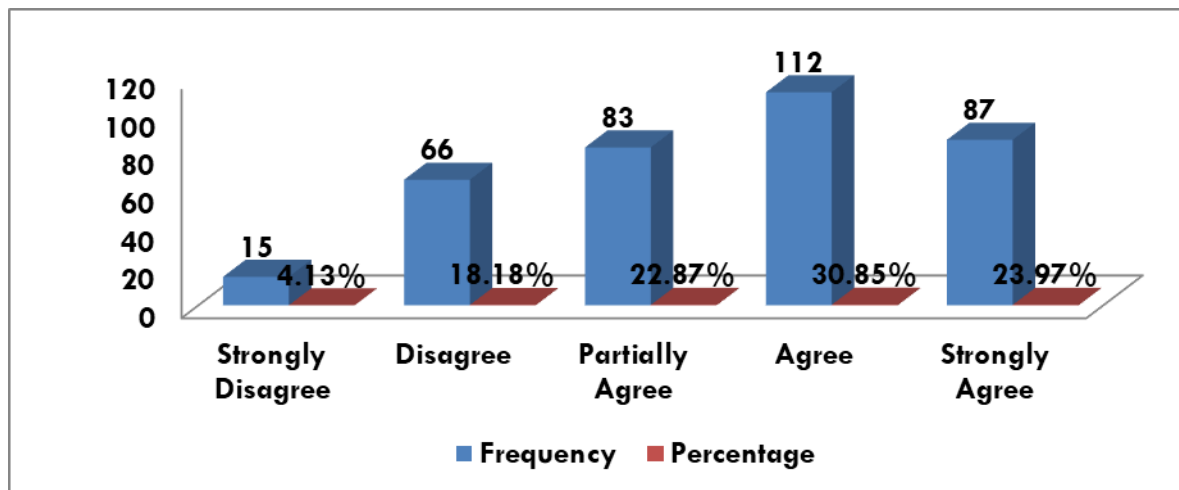
Similarly, findings from the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) revealed that many participants perceived the organizational structure of the youth sector as inadequate and ineffective. Although an organizational arrangement exists from the federal level down to the local kebele level, participants argued that the structure is too limited to effectively address the diverse needs, interests, and

demands of young people. Furthermore, participants noted that the conceptual framework guiding the youth sector is narrow in scope and insufficient to respond to the broader economic, social, and political challenges facing youth.

Overall, participants emphasized that effective implementation of youth policy requires a stable and well-structured institutional framework supported by adequate human resources, sufficient financial capacity, clear coordination mechanisms, and strong institutional commitment.

**Figure 2**

*Poor Organizational Structure*



*Note.* Data obtained from field survey, 2025

**Unclear Policy Goals and Objectives**

Figure 3 shows respondents’ perceptions regarding the clarity of youth policy goals and objectives in the study area. The figure presents respondents’ perceptions regarding the clarity of youth policy goals and objectives in the study area. The findings indicate that a substantial proportion of respondents perceive the policy goals as unclear and difficult to translate into practical implementation.

Specifically, the largest group of respondents, 116 (31.96%), partially agreed that youth policy goals and objectives are unclear. This is followed by 101 (27.82%) who agreed and 63 (17.36%) who strongly agreed with the statement. In total, 280 respondents (77.14%) expressed some level of agreement that policy goals are unclear. This indicates a strong perception among the

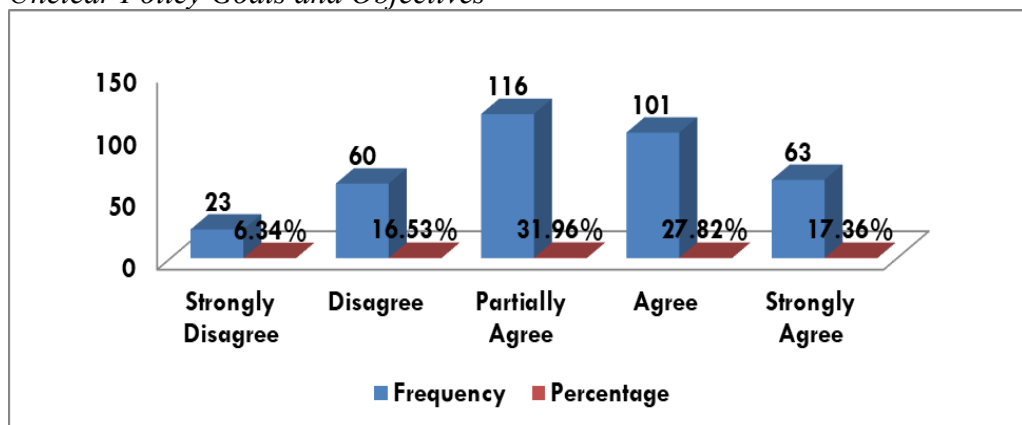
majority that ambiguity in policy objectives is a significant challenge affecting implementation.

On the other hand, 60 respondents (16.53%) disagreed and only 23 respondents (6.34%) strongly disagreed, together accounting for 83 respondents (22.87%). This minority group suggests that a smaller segment of respondents believe that the policy goals are sufficiently clear and understandable.

The qualitative findings provide important contextual clarification to the survey results regarding the perceived lack of clarity in youth policy goals and objectives. Key informant interview results indicate that 11 (73%) of respondents argued that the policy goals and objectives themselves are not inherently problematic or unclear. Instead, they emphasized that the main implementation challenge lies in weak dissemination mechanisms, inadequate training, and limited awareness among policy implementers. This suggests that the issue is less about the formulation of the policy and more about how it is communicated and operationalized at different administrative levels.

Similarly, focus group discussion participants highlighted that the National Youth Policy requires periodic revision to respond to emerging youth issues and changing socio-economic conditions. They further emphasized that many implementers lack the necessary skills and capacity to effectively translate policy objectives into practical and actionable programs. This skill gap significantly limits the effectiveness of policy execution at the local level. Overall, the qualitative evidence complements the quantitative findings by showing that implementation challenges are driven not only by perceived policy ambiguity but also by deficiencies in capacity building, policy dissemination, and adaptation to evolving youth needs.

**Figure 3**  
*Unclear Policy Goals and Objectives*



*Note.* Data obtained from field survey, 2025

### Lack of Clear Task Assignment

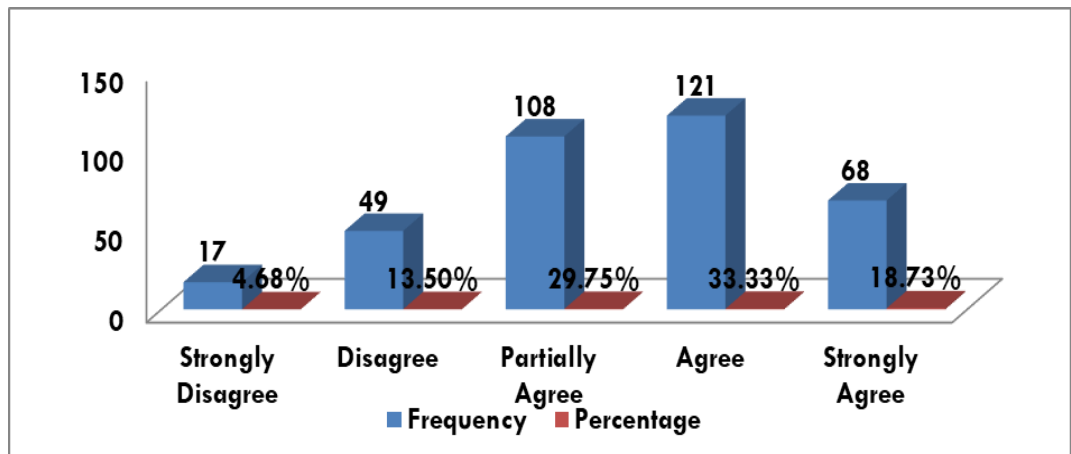
The findings indicated that unclear practical task assignment and weak accountability systems negatively affected policy implementation. As shown in Figure 4, 189 respondents (52%) strongly agreed that there was a lack of clear task assignment within the sector, while 108 (29.8%) partially agreed. In contrast, 66 respondents (18.2%) disagreed with the statement.

According to key informants, 13 (87%) strongly argued that policy implementers were not sufficiently responsible or accountable for specific youth-related activities across different sectors. Given the cross-sectorial nature of youth issues, all relevant actors are expected to actively engage in the implementation of youth policies. However, the findings revealed that many implementers failed to adequately discharge the responsibilities assigned to them. Furthermore, FGD participants indicated that although formal roles and responsibilities exist within the youth sector in the Bahir Dar City Administration, these are not effectively implemented in practice. Participants emphasized that both the youth sector offices and relevant stakeholders tend to give limited attention to youth-related programs and activities, despite the existence of numerous planned interventions.

Overall, the findings suggest that weak accountability mechanisms, unclear practical task implementation, and limited institutional commitment among stakeholders have significantly hindered the effective implementation of youth policy in the city administration.

**Figure 4**

*Lack of Clear Task Assignment*



*Note. Data obtained from field survey, 2025*

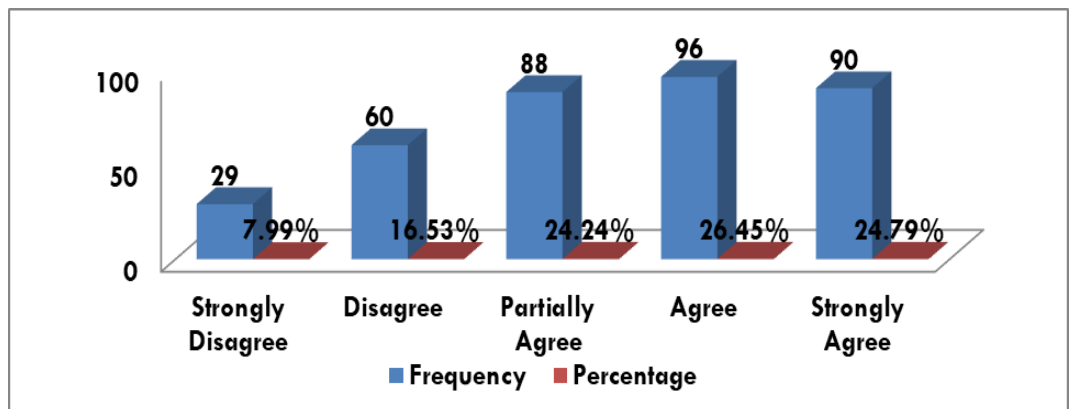
### Inadequate Budget Allocation

Inadequate budget allocation is another major challenge hindering effective youth policy implementation. As illustrated in Figure 5, 186 (51.2%) of the respondents strongly agreed that the allocated budget was insufficient to translate policy goals and objectives into practice. Similarly, 88 (24.2%) of the respondents partially agreed with the statement, whereas 89 (24.5%) disagreed. In addition, 10 (67%) of the key informants confirmed that the budget allocated for youth policy implementation was inadequate to effectively achieve the intended objectives. Likewise, participants in the focus group discussions (FGDs) indicated that insufficient financial allocation constrained the implementation of youth-related programs and projects.

Furthermore, participants explained that although the Bahir Dar City Administration allocated a considerable budget to create employment opportunities for young people, various good governance problems and bureaucratic challenges hindered the fair and effective distribution of the allocated resources. Consequently, many young people were unable to benefit from the employment opportunities provided by the city administration.

**Figure 5**

*Inadequate Budget Allocation*



*Note. Data obtained from field survey, 2025*

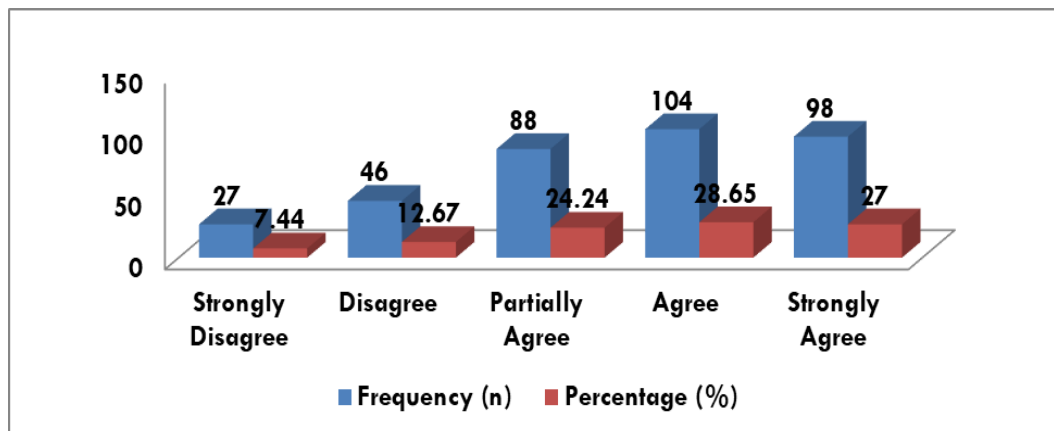
### Poor Coordination Mechanism

Poor coordination among sectors is another major challenge affecting effective youth policy implementation. As shown in Figure 6, 202 (55.7%) of the respondents strongly agreed that coordination among policy actors was weak, while 88 (24.2%) partially agreed and 73 (20.1%) disagreed.

Similarly, 9 (60%) of the key informants confirmed the existence of weak coordination among youth policy implementers and other stakeholders. Since youth issues are cross-cutting in nature, effective policy implementation requires strong collaboration among multiple institutions. However, participants in the FGDs indicated that weak coordination mechanisms in the Bahir Dar City Administration led to poor planning, monitoring, and uneven implementation of youth-related activities across sectors.

Figure 6

*Poor Policy Coordination*



*Note.* Data obtained from field survey, 2025

### Discussion on the Challenges of Youth Policy Implementation

The findings of this study suggest that youth policy implementation in the Bahir Dar City Administration is largely constrained by interconnected institutional, organizational, financial, and governance-related challenges. One of the most significant challenges is weak leadership commitment and limited strategic attention to youth issues. Although youth policy implementation requires committed leadership capable of coordinating actors, mobilizing resources, and mainstreaming youth concerns across sectors, the study revealed that youth-related agendas often receive limited priority within institutional planning and decision-making processes. This indicates that leadership

challenges are not merely related to administrative inefficiency but also reflects broader governance limitations in integrating youth development into sectoral priorities. This finding supports the arguments of May (2015) and Signé (2017), who emphasized that policy implementation outcomes largely depend on committed leadership, accountability, and institutional coordination mechanisms. Similarly, Esebua et al. (2020) argued that weak professional capacity and limited leadership attention within youth institutions significantly undermine implementation effectiveness. Further, McConnell (2010) reinforces that successful policy implementation requires strong institutional alignment, effective coordination, and accountability structures.

The study further demonstrates that organizational structure remains a critical determinant of effective youth policy implementation. Although formal institutional arrangements exist, the youth sector continues to suffer from fragmented structures, inadequate staffing, and limited professional capacity. Frequent institutional restructuring and inconsistent organizational arrangements across government levels appear to weaken institutional continuity, reduce accountability, and create uncertainty regarding mandates and responsibilities. This suggests that the challenge is not only the absence of structures but also the instability and weak institutionalization of youth-focused organizations. These findings are consistent with Peters (2014), who argued that institutional arrangements and organizational structures shape implementation effectiveness by determining authority, resource allocation, and administrative coordination. Likewise, Eze (2017) and Wagner et al. (2012) emphasized that organizational effectiveness depends on the alignment between institutional structures, human resources, and implementation demands.

Another important issue identified in this study relates to policy clarity and dissemination. While policy goals may appear clear at the national level, inadequate dissemination and limited understanding among implementers reduce the practical effectiveness of the policy at the local level. This indicates that policy implementation challenges are not necessarily caused by policy design alone but also by weak communication, limited training, and insufficient policy popularization among stakeholders. Moreover, the findings imply that the existing youth policy may no longer adequately respond to emerging youth realities and socioeconomic changes. Such limitations reduce policy relevance and weaken stakeholder ownership during implementation. This finding aligns with the arguments of May (2015), Cairney (2019), and Lipsky (2010), who noted that unclear goals, weak communication, and ambiguous implementation frameworks negatively affect policy outcomes. Similarly, Tembo (2021) emphasized that policy dissemination and stakeholder awareness are fundamental requirements for effective implementation.

The discussion also highlights that unclear task assignment and weak accountability mechanisms continue to undermine youth policy implementation. Since youth issues are cross-cutting in nature, implementation requires clearly defined institutional responsibilities and strong accountability systems across sectors. However, role overlap, ambiguous mandates, and weak ownership among implementing institutions create implementation gaps and reduce institutional commitment to youth-related activities. This suggests that policy implementation is weakened not only by resource shortages but also by the absence of effective governance arrangements that clearly define responsibilities and performance expectations. These findings support the work of Sager and Gofen (2022), who argued that effective implementation, depends on clear allocation of authority and institutional responsibilities. Similarly, Giacchino and Kakabadse (2003) emphasized that role ambiguity and unclear accountability significantly hinder organizational performance and implementation effectiveness.

Inadequate budget allocation also remains a persistent challenge affecting youth policy implementation. Although financial allocation is essential for translating policy goals into practical programs and services, youth-related activities often receive insufficient and inconsistent budgetary support. The findings further indicate that even where resources are allocated, bureaucratic inefficiencies and governance-related problems may hinder equitable and effective resource utilization. This reflects broader structural problems associated with public resource management and institutional accountability. The literature similarly confirms that insufficient financial and technical resources are major barriers to effective policy implementation, particularly in developing countries where institutional capacities remain weak (Van Meter & Van Horn, 1975; Tembo, 2021). Lipsky (2010) further argued that implementation failure often occurs when frontline institutions are expected to achieve policy objectives without adequate resources and institutional support.

Another major issue identified by the study is weak coordination among policy actors. Since youth development is inherently multidimensional and cross-sectorial, effective implementation requires strong collaboration among governmental and non-governmental stakeholders. However, weak inter-sectorial coordination limits information sharing, reduces institutional cooperation, and creates uneven implementation practices across sectors. This suggests that youth policy implementation challenges are closely associated with broader coordination failures within public administration systems. The findings are consistent with Peters (2018) and Trein et al. (2020), who argued that coordination remains one of the most difficult challenges in public governance, particularly in policy areas requiring cross-sectorial integration. Similarly,

Bayerlein et al. (2021) emphasized that policy ownership and implementation effectiveness largely depends on institutional cooperation and coordination mechanisms.

Overall, the study demonstrates that youth policy implementation challenges are multidimensional and deeply interconnected. Weak leadership commitment, fragmented organizational structures, inadequate policy dissemination, unclear institutional responsibilities, insufficient financial resources, and poor coordination mechanisms collectively undermine effective implementation outcomes.

Therefore, improving youth policy implementation requires not only policy reform but also broader institutional strengthening, enhanced governance capacity, improved accountability systems, and stronger inter-sectorial collaboration mechanisms capable of addressing the complex and evolving needs of young people.

## **Conclusion, Recommendations, and Implication**

### **Conclusion**

This study examined the challenges affecting the implementation of the National Youth Policy in Bahir Dar City Administration, Northwestern Ethiopia. The findings revealed that youth policy implementation is hindered by multiple interconnected challenges, including weak leadership commitment, poor organizational structure, inadequate budget allocation, unclear task assignment, weak coordination mechanisms, and limited institutional capacity. The study further demonstrated that implementation challenges are not solely caused by policy design problems but are also strongly influenced by governance arrangements, institutional fragmentation, limited dissemination mechanisms, and inadequate implementation capacity.

Overall, effective youth policy implementation requires strengthened institutional structures, sustained political commitment, improved coordination systems, adequate resource allocation, and continuous policy revision aligned with changing youth realities.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed to improve youth policy implementation in the Bahir Dar City Administration:

- The Bahir Dar City Administration and sector offices should strengthen leadership commitment toward youth development by integrating youth issues into institutional strategic plans, annual activities, and sectoral priorities.

- The city administration youth sector and relevant regional institutions should strengthen the organizational structure of youth offices through adequate staffing, stable institutional arrangements, and recruitment of qualified professionals in youth-related fields.
- The city administration finance offices and relevant sector institutions should allocate adequate and sustainable budgets for youth-related programs, projects, and employment initiatives to effectively implement youth policy objectives.
- Sector offices and youth institutions within the city administration should establish clear roles, responsibilities, and accountability mechanisms to improve institutional ownership and reduce role overlap in youth-related activities.
- The city administration youth offices, in collaboration with regional institutions, should provide continuous policy dissemination, awareness creation, and training programs to improve implementers' understanding of youth policy goals and implementation strategies.
- Strong coordination and collaboration mechanisms should be established among sector offices, youth institutions, educational institutions, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders involved in youth development activities within the city administration.
- Since respondents indicated that the existing youth policy has become outdated, relevant regional and federal institutions should periodically review and revise the National Youth Policy to address emerging youth challenges and changing socioeconomic conditions.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting its findings. First, the study was geographically confined to the Bahir Dar City Administration; therefore, the findings may not fully represent the broader implementation challenges of the National Youth Policy across other regions of Ethiopia, which may differ in socio-economic, political, and administrative contexts.

Second, the study largely relied on respondents' perceptions and self-reported data collected through questionnaires, key informant interviews, and focus group discussions. As a result, the findings may be subject to response biases such as social desirability bias, recall bias, or individual subjective interpretation of policy implementation processes.

Third, the cross-sectional research design limited the study's ability to capture changes in youth policy implementation over time and to establish

causal relationships between implementation challenges and policy outcomes. Consequently, the findings reflect a snapshot of the situation at a single point in time rather than dynamic trends. Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable empirical insights into youth policy implementation challenges in Ethiopia.

## **Future Research Directions**

Future studies should expand the geographical scope of the research by including different regions of Ethiopia to enable comparative analysis of youth policy implementation challenges across diverse socio-economic and political contexts. Comparative studies between urban and rural areas may also provide deeper insights into context-specific implementation challenges and opportunities.

In addition, future researchers are encouraged to employ longitudinal research designs to examine how the implementation of the National Youth Policy evolves over time and to assess the long-term impacts of policy interventions on youth empowerment, employment, participation, and social inclusion. Mixed-method and quantitative impact evaluation studies could further strengthen understanding of the effectiveness of specific youth programs and implementation strategies.

Future research should also explore the role of emerging factors such as digital governance, social media engagement, political participation, and community-based institutions in youth policy implementation. Moreover, investigating the perspectives of marginalized and vulnerable youth groups, including unemployed youth, rural youth, young women, and persons with disabilities, would provide more inclusive evidence for policy improvement.

Finally, further studies should examine institutional coordination, governance practices, and resource mobilization mechanisms that influence youth policy implementation at federal, regional, and local government levels. Such studies would contribute to the development of evidence-based strategies for improving youth policy implementation and promoting sustainable youth development in Ethiopia.

## **Declarations**

### **Ethical Approval**

This study was conducted in accordance with the ethical standards outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki (2013). Ethical approval was obtained from the Research and Development Committee of Amhara Region State University.

## Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

## Funding

No external funding was received for this study.

## Data Availability

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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