

## Youth Unemployment and Insecurity: Impediment of Nation-Building in Nigeria

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### Abstract

Nigeria's population is estimated to be about two hundred million, out of which the youth population, (15 -35 years of age) is said to be 75%. According to a recent World Bank statistics, youth unemployment rate is 38 per cent, but even this figure is considered conservative. It is estimated that about 60% of Nigeria's youth population is either unemployed or underemployed, a situation that poses great danger to the Nigeria Society in terms of crimes and assorted social vices. This generation of young people faces the dual crisis of unemployment and insecurity. Such a large population of unemployed, unengaged, angry, sullen, unproductive youths in any society will constitute a menace and security risk because their lives appear hopeless and yet they are full of youthful energy. Recent studies suggest that unemployment rate in Nigeria has taken a shocking increase from 14 per cent in 2012 to 38 per cent in 2015. It also revealed that unemployment rate is undoubtedly contributed to the high wave of insecurity in the country. As a matter of fact, Nigeria has never had it so bad, for over five years now, in terms of insecurity and criminality. More worrisome is the fact that criminality and terrorism, which have further crippled the economic development of the country, are perpetrated by young people. Hence, this paper examines this phenomenon and calls for a comprehensive multi-dimensional plan of action to combat youth employment before its associated consequences become unmanageable and consume the Nigerian Society. It examines the issue of unemployment and juxtaposes this along side the broader issue of national security. It examines present problems of youth unemployment and insecurity in Nigeria, its causes, social and economic implications, and possible solutions. The paper asserts that youths should be properly trained to possess skills which are congruent with real labour market demands, which will invariably, create employment opportunities, that would make the youth become productive assets and take their place in mainstream societal development the society offer the best of their skills and talents rather than getting themselves involved in criminality.

**Keywords:** Youth, Unemployment, Insecurity, Nigeria

### Introduction

Unemployment has become a major problem bedeviling the lives of Nigerian youth, causing increased militancy, violent crimes, kidnappings, restiveness and socially delinquent behaviours. Youth unemployment is devastating to both the individual and the society as a whole both psychologically and economically. Youth unemployment is a global issue; however it is more pronounced in developing countries of the world, with attendant social, economic, political, and psychological consequences, hence, high youth unemployment in any country should be of concern to policy makers. Global unemployment remained stable at 8% between 2010 and 2013, according to Gallup surveys of 148 countries. Unemployment was highest in the Middle East and North Africa (22%) and sub-Saharan Africa 17%. However, Nigeria's unemployment rate is higher than the sub-region's average at 23.9% in 2014 compared with the previous years.<sup>2</sup>

Besides insecurity and corruption in high places, unemployment remains one of the most critical problems the country is facing, of course coming after insecurity Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa and the largest economy on the continent with a population of over 170 million, is endowed with diverse and abundant human, material and capital resources. Sadly, however, years of unbridled corruption, mis-management and sheer waste have hindered economic growth in the country<sup>3</sup>. Consequently, the nation's resources have been left underutilized leading to unemployment and abject poverty, the twin evils which experts believe may scuttle the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals.

According to a recent World Bank report, youth unemployment rate is 38 per cent, but realistically, 60 per cent of Nigerian youths are unemployed with secondary school-leavers mostly found among unemployed rural population accounting for about half of this figure, while university and polytechnic graduates make up the rest.<sup>4</sup> Yet the nation's universities and polytechnics continue to churn out more than 150,000 graduates annually and available jobs remain inadequate to keep pace with the ever-expanding army of job seekers. Political violence, social insecurity and sundry crimes are traceable in Nigeria as in other countries, to high rates of

<sup>2</sup> Muhammad Kabir Salihu, Abdulsalam S.A. & Abdulmalik Mohammed Yusuf "Youth Unemployment and Insecurity". Anti Essays. 8 Oct. 2015

<sup>3</sup> The PUNCH Addressing youth unemployment in Nigeria, November 26, (2013) , Bilikis Bakare

<sup>4</sup> See World Bank "Problems of Unemployment and Poverty in the Developing World" An Annual Report, 2012

unemployment among youths who constitute the able-bodied and economically-active groups in the civic population.

We can infer that, the increasing spate of sectarian insurrection, crimes and terrorism, which we have experienced in the past few years in Nigeria, may not be unconnected with the alarming rate of youth unemployment. It is a fact that majority of Nigerian youths are unemployed; while the few ones in employment are confronted with so much socio-economic pressure from hordes of dependants.

The recent estimated data from the National Bureau of Statistics show that of the over 90million youth-population, about 56 per cent are unemployed, while 9 per cent are under-employed and only 35 per cent are employed! However, some factors have been identified as elements that stoke embers of youth unemployment and under-employment in Nigeria.<sup>5</sup>

The increasing number of unemployed youths, about 60 million estimated, is almost the population of Great Britain; this number has easily overwhelmed the already saturated labour markets in all states of the federation. The public institutions like National Directorate of Employment, NAPEP, etc, appear docile, as they have no feasible or virile policy coordination or framework that is comprehensive and coherent enough to tackle the challenges of youth unemployment.<sup>6</sup> There are concerns that despite some regional differences, the global youth unemployment rate continues to rise and is projected to reach 12.8 per cent by 2018. Behind this worsening figure is an even more worrying picture, revealing persistent unemployment, a proliferation of temporary jobs and growing youth discouragement in advanced economies; and poor quality, informal, subsistence jobs in developing countries. The security situation caused by incessant attacks by insurgents in the North and kidnapping in the South-East is part of the numerous causes of unemployment due to the fact that no investor will like to put his money where he will be afraid of moving freely.<sup>7</sup>

It is pertinent to note that if the current spate of unemployment continues unabated, many of Nigerian's these graduates will eventually be recruited into the rank of oil theft syndicates, armed robbers, kidnappers, militants and insurgents; while their female counterparts will end up as prostitutes. Therefore, to reduce the problem of unemployment in the country, the private sector and government at all levels, must put in place creative measures to stem the tide.

## Conceptual Framework

### Unemployment

It is important to understand and have the conception of three key terms; unemployment, youth and insecurity. In a simple definition, unemployment means joblessness. This occurs when people are without jobs and they have actively sought work without success. It can be when one does not have the required skills or knowledge for available jobs. The International Labour Organization(ILO) defines the unemployed as numbers of the economically active population, who are without work but available for and seeking work, including people who have lost their jobs and those who have voluntarily left work.<sup>8</sup>Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia emphasized considerable theoretical debate 'regarding the causes, consequences and solutions for unemployment. Classical, neo-classical and the Australian School of Economics argue that labour market mechanisms are reliable means of resolving unemployment.

Keynesian economics emphasizes the cyclical nature of employment and unemployment and recommends interventions, which it claims will reduce unemployment during recessions. One of the main causes of unemployment is the structural unemployment, which focuses on structural problems "in the economy and the inefficiencies inherent in labour markets, including a mismatch between the supply and demand of labourers with necessary skill sets".<sup>9</sup>However, the unemployment focuses on voluntary decisions not to work, based on each individuals valuation of their own work.

Iyoha, Oyefusi and Oriakhi<sup>10</sup>, identified four types of unemployment: frictional, structural, demand-deficient cyclical or Keynesian and classical unemployment. Some other scholars identified another class of unemployment which is seasonal unemployment.

- Seasonal unemployment: This type appears and disappears with the season of a particular year, occasioned by variations with the season. For instance, people are employed during production season of a company and become unemployed in other period's e.g. fertilizer company.

<sup>5</sup> See National Bureau of Statistics on unemployment Rate in Nigeria in 2011.

<sup>6</sup> SeeThe PUNCH "Youth unemployment and insecurity", November 18, 2012 online News by Kunle Rotimi

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

<sup>8</sup> World Bank, . "Alleviating Unemployment and Poverty Under Adjustment" , Report of an ILO? Addis Ababa (1998) JASPA Employment Advisory Mission.

<sup>9</sup> See Wikipedia. "Definition of peace" Available at <http://www.wikipedia.org>. Assesed on 14<sup>th</sup> July, 2012.

<sup>10</sup> Iyoha, M.A. Oyefusi, S.A. and Oriakhi, D.E.. *An Introduction to Modern Macro Economics*. Benin: Sylva Publication ,2006 pp 22.

- Frictional unemployment: It occurs when people move between jobs; causing temporary displacement. It is otherwise known as transitional unemployment.
- Structural unemployment: This occurs when there are structural changes in the economy which requires highly specialized skills. E.g the aged workers whose skills are no longer needed and those who are reluctant or unable to retain or relocate.
- Cyclical unemployment: This happens in big industries. When changes occur in business conditions such as economic recession and depression as it sometimes obtains in automobile, construction and steel companies. Those in their employment can only come back when the economy improves.
- Classical unemployment: This is occasioned by the minimum wage regulation and/or there may be an abnormally high (above equilibrium) wage rate in the labour market. Depending on the labour market and economy, when prevailing wage rate is fixed in any labour market arbitrarily above the equilibrium level, the demand for labour falls below the supply, thus, unemployment occurs.

### Youth Unemployment

Youths occupy a prominent place in any society. They are one of the greatest assets any nation can have. Apart from being the leaders of tomorrow, they out-number the middle-aged and the aged.<sup>11</sup>The National Youth Development Policy (2001) asserts that the youth are the foundation of a society; their energies, inventiveness, character and orientation define the pattern of development and security of a nation.

Through their creative talents and labour power, a nation makes giant strides. The youth are a particular segment of the national population that is sensitive, energetic, active and the most productive phase of life as citizens. The youth are also most volatile and yet the most vulnerable segment of the population in terms of social economic, emotion and other aspects. The National Youth Development Policy, (2001) defines youth as people aged between 18 and 35. They constitute about 75 percent of the more than 170 million people of Nigeria.

According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2004), young people aged between 15 and 24 years account for 52.9 percent of unemployed people while those aged between 25 and 44 years accounted for 41.1 percent. Youth's unemployment in Nigeria is a consequence of several factors<sup>12</sup> One major factor is that of population growth. Nigeria has continued to experience high rate of population growth. This increasing population growth has produced an overwhelming increase in the youth population thereby resulting in an increase in the size of the working age population.

Related to the rapid population growth is the massive rural-urban migration by the youth. According to the United Nations (UN) Report (1999), the high degree of geographical mobility of youth in Africa is in form of rural to urban which has been influencing youth unemployment. In Nigeria, youth migrate to the cities more than other migrants and in the cities, job opportunities are very limited. Thus, the rate of urban migration of the youth has continued to create unemployment.

### Security/ Insecurity

Security is the degree of resistance to, or protection from, harm. It applies to any vulnerable and valuable asset, such as a person, dwelling, community, nation, or organization. The Oxford dictionaries define security as the state of being free from danger or threats. The system may be designed to provide maximum security against attack or incursion. It is the safety of a state or organisation against criminal activity such as terrorism, theft or espionage....

Obasanjo conceives national security, as the aggregate of security interest of all individuals, communities, ethnic groups and the entire political entity.<sup>13</sup>

Abraham Maslow describes an insecure person as a person who "perceives the world as a threatening jungle and most human beings as dangerous and selfish; feels rejected and isolated anxious and hostile; is generally pessimistic and unhappy; shows signs of tension and conflict, tends to turn inward; is troubled by guilt-feelings, has one or another manifestations of low self-esteem; tends to be neurotic; and is generally selfish and egocentric. Insecurity may contribute to the development of shyness, paranoia, and social withdrawal, or alternatively it may encourage compensatory behaviours such as crime related offences, arrogance, aggression, or bullying in some cases."<sup>14</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Onyekpe, N. "Managing youth at election: The constitution" in *A Journal of constitutional development* (2007) 1(1): 76 – 85

<sup>12</sup> Osibanjo, O. "Concept of Entrepreneurship: A paper presented at the workshop on entrepreneurship and innovation for 200 level students (2006), in the University of Ibadan, Ibadan.

<sup>13</sup> Obasanjo, O "Grand Strategy for National Security, Abuja: Federal Ministry of Information. 1999.

<sup>14</sup> Maslow, A. H. . "The Dynamics of Psychological Security-Insecurity". (1942), *Journal of Personality* 10 (4): 331–334. University press, Yale.

National security is the requirement to maintain the survival of the state through the use of economic power, diplomacy, power projection, and political power. The concept developed mostly in the United States after World War II. Initially focusing on the military might, it now encompasses a broad range of facets, including the non military or economic security of the nation and values espoused by the national society. Security threats involve not only conventional foes such as other nation states, but also others such as violent non state actors, narcotic cartels, multinational corporations and non-governmental organizations. Some authorities include natural disasters that cause severe environmental damage in the society.

### **Theoretical Framework**

In every descriptive, work there is a body of theories that provides the explanation for observable phenomena in that field. The theoretical requirement of this work is draw from frustration-aggression theory and relative deprivation theory which are believed to have provided a detailed explanation for the emergence of insurgency and insecurity in Nigeria. The frustration- aggression theory was propounded and developed by John Dollard<sup>15</sup> and his research associates in 1939 and has been expanded and modified by the likes Leonard and & Audrey<sup>16</sup> The theory properly created the analogy used within this research to explain the dynamics of unemployment and insecurity in Nigeria.

John Dollard explained that it seems to be that most common explanation for violent behaviour stemmed from inability to fulfill needs. In attempts to explain aggression, scholars' point to the difference between what people feels they want or deserve to and what they actually get. That is, between expected need of satisfaction and actual need of satisfaction. When expectation does not meet attainment, the tendency is for people to confront those held responsible for their frustrating and non-realization of their ambitions.

Therefore, frustration aggression provides that aggression is not just undertaken as a natural reaction or instinct as realist and biological theorists assume but that is the outcome of frustration and that in a situation where the desire of an individual is denied either directly or by the indirect consequence of the way the society is structured, the feeling of disappointment may lead such a person to express his anger through violence that will be directed to those he holds responsible or people who are directly or indirectly related to them.<sup>17</sup>

It has largely been argued that complaints of deprivations in the allocation of political positions, economic resources and empowerment provoke violence, conflict, muscle flexing, tension as well as insurgency and militancy. In pluralistic African societies, relative deprivations are rife, hence, constitute sources of unemployment. Also deprivations constitute crisis potency policy, as the central government allows one group to gain in the allocation of resources and position at the expenses (loss) of its rival federating components. There are mutual ethnics suspicions, religious intolerance and absence of empowerment which have increasingly assumed dangerous dimensions in the last one decade in Nigeria in particular and Africa in general.

Moreover, relative deprivation theory explains the increasing the allegation of the minority nationality usurping the political powers that ought to have been controlled by the others which escalates insecurity. These conflicts are always intense so much so that it increases competition among insurgents and the militants.

As one geo-political zone feels relatively deprived in the allocation of position and provision of economic empowerment, it becomes exposed to feelings of violence and hostility. In the circumstances, aggression against innocent people in the whole nation state thus becomes unavoidable and more intense. The concomitant effect is the breakdown of law and order and severe insecurity accompanied by colossal loss of lives and properties as currently experienced in the Nigeria.

### **Causes of Youth Unemployment in Nigeria**

In their various studies, Echebiri, Ayinde and Okeke, identify the ,main causes of youth unemployment in Nigeria include:

1. Growing Urban labour force: The rapidly growing urban labour force arising from rural-urban migration is a major factor that contributes to youth unemployment. The rural-urban migration is usually explained in terms of push-pull factors. The push factors include the pressure resulting from land ratio in the rural areas and the existence of serious unemployment arising from the seasonal cycle of climate. The factors are further exacerbated in Nigeria by the lack of infrastructural facilities which makes the rural life unattractive.<sup>18</sup>
2. Rapid Population Growth: Going by the 2006 census in Nigeria, the nation's population was put at 140,431,790 and projections for the future indicate that the population could be over 180 million by

<sup>15</sup> John Dollard , *The frustration-aggression hypothesis*, institute of human relatios, (1939),pp 209

<sup>16</sup> Leonard B. & Audrey .Y , *The frustration-aggression theory*, (1962), 337-366.

<sup>17</sup> Akwen, G.T. , *Theories of International Relations*. Lap: Lambert Academic Publisher,(2011).pp 23-26.

<sup>18</sup> Echibiri, C.M. "Strategies for Promoting Entrepreneurship Education among undergraduates (2005): The Perception of Counsellors Uni Zik Orient Journal 3 (1), 87-96.

2020, given the annual growth rate of 2.2 percent (National Population Commission).

With this population, Nigeria is the most populous nation in Africa. It is argued that the high population growth rate has resulted in the rapid growth of the labour force which is far outstripping supply of jobs.

3. Outdated school curricula: - Some scholars argue that as far as the formal sector is concerned, the average Nigerian graduate is not employable because he does not possess the skills needed by the employers of labour. This is often attributed to the nation's educational system which has a liberal arts / social science bias. The course contents of most tertiary education in Nigeria lack entrepreneurial contents that would have enabled graduates to become job creators rather than job seekers.<sup>19</sup>
4. Rapid Expansion of the Education System: This contributes to the problem of youth unemployment as expansion of the educational system leads to increase in the supply of educated manpower above the corresponding demand for them. For instances, Nigerian tertiary institution turned out 131,016 graduates in 1996/1997. Presently with over 150 universities in Nigeria (Federal, State and Private) and the increasing demand for higher education, there has been the problem of suitable employment for a graduate that are turned out every year. Ordinarily, this should not have been a problem but the reality is that the Nigerian economy is too weak to absorb this large number of graduates.<sup>20</sup>

Corruption: The issue of corruption which are acknowledged to have permeated the entire social structure of Nigeria has robbed the country of developing a vibrant economic base. Funds meant for development projects have been misappropriated, diverted or embezzled and stashed away in foreign banks while some incompetent and corrupt bureaucrats and administrators in the public enterprise and parastatals have liquidated these organizations.

### Unemployment Scenario in Nigeria

In Nigeria, unemployment rate has increased by the year. For example (National Bureau of Statistics), unemployment rates were 12.3% in 2006, 12.7% in 2007, 14.9% in 2008, 19.7% in 2009, 21.1% in 2010 and 29.9% in 2011. This is an indication that the phenomenon is annually increasing. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), the Nigerian unemployment report of 2011 shows that the rate of unemployment is higher in rural areas (25.6%) than in the urban areas (17.1%). This is not unexpected as the youths prefer white colour jobs, which are in very short supply in the rural areas<sup>21</sup>. Our youths are becoming disinterested in agriculture and even apprenticeship for gainful skills. Instead, youths prefer motor cycle riding that provides not even enough to feed the rider and family on daily basis and have no future.

Economy Watch, sees unemployment in Nigeria as one of most critical problems the country is facing, which is increasing the level of corruption and insecurity. The years of civil war, military rule and mismanagement of resources have hindered economic growth in Nigeria.

If the abundant resources in terms of mineral resources, petroleum, agricultural resources and even human capital have been effectively and transparently utilized, unemployment rate would have been reduced drastically.<sup>22</sup>

According to the Bureau of Statistics, the Nigeria Unemployment Rate averaged between 14.60 Percent from 2006 until 2011, reaching an all time high of 23.90 Percent in December of 2011.<sup>23</sup>

According to the Bureau report, in advanced economies, the youth unemployment rate in 2012 was 18.1 per cent, adding that it is likely to remain above 17 per cent until 2015 and is not predicted to drop below 17 per cent before 2016. It observed that, more than half of the economically active youth populations in Nigeria are unemployed.<sup>24</sup>

According to the Bureau report, two thirds of working age youth in some developing countries, including Nigeria, are either unemployed or trapped in low-quality jobs. For instance, it is no longer news that the youth unemployment rate in Nigeria is more than double what published figures show.<sup>25</sup>

Over the years, many factors have contributed to rise in unemployment such as economic down-turn, of late 1970s especially the stabilization policy which restricted exports, thus causing import dependency of many Nigerian manufacturing companies, with the consequent in balance in their operations and installed capacity, and the closure of many industries that threw several people out of job.

<sup>19</sup> Ayorinde, A.I., "Tertiary Entrepreneurship Education and Graduate Self Employment Potentials in Nigeria Journal of World Universities Forum vol.1 No3 PP 131 – 142

<sup>20</sup> Okeke, J.A."Students Insights into Entrepreneurship in vocational and Technical Education (2011) Journal of Academics 1, 1208-209.

<sup>21</sup> Olaiya, S .A. "Towards vision 20:20:20: Head for attitudinal change emphasis on youth unemployment. In African journal of stability and development (2012), Vol. 7 No 1.

<sup>22</sup> See Economy Watch Journal, 2012

<sup>23</sup> National Bureau of Statistics (NBS). Social Statistics in Nigeria, Abuja (2009) .The NBS Publication.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid

<sup>25</sup> Ibid

### **Nexus between Unemployment and Insecurity in Nigeria**

The high rate of insecurity and violence in Nigeria is a reflection of long accumulated frustration of youth unemployment and deep-rooted poverty. This has adjudged to be the most viable justification for the recurrent violence, including religion and sectarian violence.<sup>26</sup>

Clapham opined that “the breakdown of law and order on African continent was basically, the result of the legacy of bad governance”<sup>27</sup>. The Niger Delta militancy, O’dua Youth restifiness, Bakassi and Egbesu boys’ dilemma and Boko Haram sectarian violence are traceable to bad governance.

Commenting on poverty-unemployment relationship and interface, the former governor of Rivers State Rotimi Amaechi, asserts that the phenomena are “responsible for high rate of insecurity in Nigeria buttressing his point, he claimed that until we deal with the issues of poverty, wealth creation and unemployment, then we may not be able to solve the problem of insecurity”<sup>28</sup>

The World Bank corroborated the foregoing interface between poverty, unemployment and insecurity in Africa by saying that “unemployment, poor and under employed youth are more exposed to conflicts and illegal activities. Many of them (African Youth) fall prey to armed and rebel conflicts”.<sup>29</sup>

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The situation in Nigeria has got to the level where there should be a decisive declaration of emergency in youth unemployment.

First, there are ineffective mechanisms for overcoming the challenges of cyclical and structural youth unemployment in Nigeria. From the ages of 18 to 45 years, there are no composite measures on ground, with which to solve the perennial problems of unemployment and to alleviate poverty at all levels of governance.

Therefore, government at all levels must rise, more responsibly to the occasion, by addressing these growing challenges of youth unemployment, and by creating greater ambience of pragmatic empowerment among the economically-active group. The population explosion in Nigeria coupled with our porous borders should compel our government to be more proactive in tackling the security situation as urgently as possible.

There should also be accurate and reliable national statistics or data of employable citizens and job seekers, vis-à-vis their qualifications and available vacancies, number of yearly retirees or opportunities to support self-employment in all sectors as these will guide policymakers in identifying fundamental needs of Nigerians on manpower planning and educational management, not just giving free licenses to proliferate mushroom tertiary institutions, churning out certificated robots which today had tagged Nigerians youth unemployable.

Poorly skilled individuals are replete in all sectors of the nation’s economy and to address this, acquisition of vocational skills has been identified as a tool for moulding employable individuals as unemployed individual’s need more skills than they already have to find new jobs. Graduates of various institutions should be encouraged to acquire vocational skills that can prepare them for self-employment and financial independence because with paid employment, one earns a living but with self-employment one’s earning is unlimited.

More importantly, competencies of entrepreneurship should be incorporated into the school and training curricular mostly in higher institutions in the country. Curriculum must be review to admit vocational and skill acquisition training as part of a renewed effort to produce graduates that would generate employment for others. As a reordering of the higher institutions curriculum to meet the extant socio-economic realities would go a long way in solving current unemployment trend in the country.

Finally, Emphasis should not be unduly placed on certificate acquisition. Knowledge and skills acquisition should be made popular thereby enhancing the spirit of creativity and innovation.

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<sup>26</sup> Danjibo, N.D. “Islamic Fundamentalism and Secretarian Violence: the “Maitasine” and “Boko-Haram crisis in Northern Nigeria”. (2008). Being a paper presented at the peace and conflict studies programme, Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan.

<sup>27</sup> Clapham “Problems of Peace Enforcement: Lesson to be drawn from Multinational Peace Keeping Operations in Ongoing Conflicts in Africa(2002). In Zack-Williams, T. et al (eds) African Crisis

<sup>28</sup> Amaechi, R.C. “Poverty, Unemployment Responsible for High Rate of Insecurity in Nigeria” (2013). A key note address delivered at University of Port-Harcourt.

<sup>29</sup> See World Bank “Problems of Unemployment and Poverty in the Developing World” An Annual Report,2012