

The Socio-Economic Impact of Youth Unemployment in Nigeria: A Case Study of Idah Local Government, Kogi State

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Abstract

The high rate of unemployment among the youths in Nigeria has arguably contributed to the high rate of poverty and insecurity in the country. The aim of the study therefore is to investigate the socio-economic consequences of youth unemployment in Nigeria. A case study of Idah Government Area of Kogi State. Simple Random Sampling (SRS) was employed in the selection of 300 residents of the local government surveyed for the study. The study revealed that the causes of unemployment in Idah include bad governance, lack of industries, lack of employable skills and rapid growth of the population. Also, the socio-economic consequences of youth unemployment in Idah Local Government are poverty, political thuggery and kidnapping for ransom. The study recommends among others, the provision of credit facilities to the unemployed to embark on viable business ventures, improvement in the quality of governance and provisioning of skill acquisition programmes, as measures to mitigate youth unemployment and its societal consequences.

Keywords: Socio-economic impact, Youth, Unemployment, Local government, Nigeria

Introduction

Youth unemployment is becoming an increasingly troublesome issue in many parts of the world. In Nigeria, it has become one of the most serious socioeconomic problems confronting the country. The magnitude of this can be appreciated if accurate statistics could be obtained from the Federal Bureau of Statistics on the number of unemployed youths roaming the streets of Nigerian cities. However, Awogbenle and Iwuamadi (2010) observed from the excerpts of Statistics obtained from the National Manpower Board and Federal Bureau of Statistics showed that Nigeria has a youth population of eighty (80) million representing 60 percent of the total population of the country. Sixty-four (64) million of them are unemployed while one million six hundred thousand (1.6million) are underemployed. Unemployment has become a major problem bedeviling the lives of Nigerian youth causing frustration, dejection and dependency on family members and friends, who also have their own problems to contend with.

The high rate of unemployment among the youths in Nigeria has contributed to the high rate of poverty and insecurity in the country. Unemployment is a worldwide economic problem. causing poverty and lack. In recent times, there have been notable adverse social, economic and political developments in Nigeria, a consequence of youth unemployment and underemployment, particularly exemplified by increasing militancy, violent crimes, kidnapping, restiveness and political instability. The Nigerian situation is further compounded by the recent global financial crisis that has crippled businesses and the prospect of securing jobs for young people (Fanimu and Olayinka, 2009): Adejumola and Tayo-Olajubulu (2009) contended that unemployment has been identified as one of the major causes of social vices, including armed robbery, destitution, prostitution, political thuggery, kidnapping and many more. Musari (2009) corroborated this statement by saying that about 4.5 million enter the labour market every year without any hope of getting employment for life sustenance. The precarious situation has left the youths in a vicious cycle of poverty that daily erodes their self-confidence and bright future.

President Ibrahim Babangida's regime (1984-1993) handled unemployment by introducing National Directorate of Employment (NDE) without success. President Olusegun Obasanjo's

administration (1999-2007) came up with the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) but could not solve this menace. President Umaru Yaradua's administration (2007-2010) with the view of solving this problem initiated the seven (7) points agenda, yet no meaningful achievement was recorded and President Goodluck Jonathan (2011-2015) Administration Launched Youth Enterprise with New Innovations (YOUWIN). The menace of unemployment has increasingly been recognized as one of the socioeconomic problems currently facing many developing countries like Nigeria and Africa as a whole. Adelodun, (2006) stated that unemployment consists of not only educated rural population but also of some educated persons. Nigeria's underemployment and low productivity is of a vicious cycle. Nwodo, (2011) wants the Federal and State Government to urgently address the growing issues of youth unemployment, insecurity and other social vices rampaging our country.

Youths are regarded as the future leaders of tomorrow and are usually acknowledged as the bedrock on which the society is anchored. They are possibly and essentially the utmost asset for a country development (UN: 2007). Therefore, any society or country that plays with the welfare and development of its youths could be said to be playing with its future and survival (Alanana 2003). Unfortunately, in Nigeria, the youths have not only been abandoned and left to their fate, but have been afflicted by so many ills, among which are spiral unemployment and abject poverty. In fact, it is an understatement to state that the Nigerian youths today have no future, as there is no serious social programmes or economic policy to cater for the interests and needs of the youths, despite the existence of some agencies in Nigeria, such as the National Directorate of Employment (NDE), National Economic and Empowerment Development Scheme (NEEDS), National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) N-Power Programme, in order to alleviate the suffering of the youths. Still, in Nigeria, youths are confronted with problems of poverty, illiteracy, drug abuse, juvenile delinquency, crime, prostitution and fraudulent activities which are all associated with unemployment (Freedom, 2008).

It is on this background that the study is undertaken with the view of examining the cause, consequences and possible solutions to youth unemployment having Idah Local Government Area of Kogi State as a case study.

Conceptual Literature

The Concept of Unemployment

There is no gain saying the fact that employment is one of the basic needs of man. Without employment man may not be able to meet other needs like food, shelter, clothing, and medical bills. Consequently, this brings us to the main issue; unemployment. The International Labour Organization (ILO) defines the unemployed as numbers of the economically active population who *are* willing and seeking for work, without work being available, including people who have lost their jobs and those who have voluntarily left work (World Bank, 1998). Fajana (2000) says, unemployment refers to a situation where people who are willing and capable of working are unable to find suitable paid employment. It is one of the macro-economic problems which every responsible government is expected to monitor and regulate. The higher the unemployment rate in an economy the higher would be the poverty level and associated welfare challenges.

Causes of Youth Unemployment

There are many causes of youth unemployment in the world, and in Nigeria such as:

Poor Educational Planning: It is a widely held view that high rate of unemployment among our graduates is traceable to our educational system. Nigerian educational system does not equip our graduate with adequate skills and tools for societal needs. They also contended that our educational system is faulty because it does not prepare the graduates for self-employment (Obi, 1980).

Wrong Impression about Technical and Vocational Studies: The wrong impression of students about the place of technical and vocational education also accounts for the deteriorating state of unemployment in Nigeria. There is an enduring societal biased attitude against technical and vocational education (Damachi, 2001).

The Neglect of the Agricultural Sector: The agricultural sector has been the leading provider of employment in Nigeria especially in the sixties and in the seventies when the sector provided employment for more than 60 percent of the Nigerian population. However, in the wake of oil discovery, agriculture was abandoned resulting in unemployment.

Poor Enabling Environment: The poor economic enabling environment that characterizes the economy over the years has continued to pose serious challenges to employment generation in Nigeria. Many job seekers who would have embarked on self-employment programs are unable to do so because of the hostile production environment and lack of conducive investment environment, (Abdullah, 1999).

Unstable Political Environment: A stable political environment usually enhances macroeconomic stability. Today, African countries are characterized by military coups, inter-tribal warfare, border disputes and complete breakdown of law and order. Political instability doesn't attract foreign investment. (Abdullah, 1999). The inflow of foreign resources has facilitated the expansion of Nigeria's industrial activity thereby making the sector to contribute significantly to the Gross Domestic Production (GDP). Nigerian has been relatively unstable politically (Gbosi, 2005), Bajoma (1996) has classified the causes of unemployment in Nigeria as (a) Economic (b) Social and (c) Political causes of unemployment.

High Population Growth: Population growth has continued to experience high growth due to high birth rate resulting in rapid growth of labour which outstripped the supply of jobs (Nweke, 2002). Also, improvement in healthcare delivery has reduced infant mortality rate with increased population growth.

Massive Rural - Urban migration by the Young People: In the view of Gbosi (2005), the nature of unemployment is as a result of lack of proper skill expansion in our educational institutions, faulty curricular and orientation. The government is also blamed for the wrong orientation of students and poor salary structure in the public sector that has no special incentives for those who possess such skills. Hence, our educational system is liberal arts-biased; so that young school leavers apparently could not find jobs.

Lack of employable skills due to inappropriate school curricula: Analysts have argued that in Africa generally, the skills that job seekers possess do not match the needs and demands of employers (McGrath, 1999; Kent and Mushi, 1995). The educational system in Nigeria indeed, over supplies the labour market with graduates that do not possess the skills needed by employers. Many graduates lack entrepreneurial skills to facilitate self-employment.

Perception about employment: Policy makers and youths, perceive employment as job with salary and working for someone else; hence, the influence on institutions in Nigeria to provide skills and training (Williams, 2001). Consequently, curricula and training programmes are generally tailored towards preparing young people for formal sector jobs, hence is supply-driven (Kakwagh Venatus and Ikwuba Agnes, 2010; Akaneze, 2011).

Lack of professional Training: Like the absence of other educational services, there are very few and inefficient institutes for professional training, especially in the rural areas, (Elaigwu, 2008).

Lack of Opportunities and market Capacity: Zack-Williams (2000) opined that, the collapse of state institutions and the demise of traditional family coping with structures have left a social gap which, whereas once filled via the protection offered by the social organization of street life, the various military forces are now filling in. In fact, life on the street has given many young

Nigerians qualities that make them brave fighters as opined, by Kanyenze, et al. (2000) (Liebrandt and Mlatsheni, 2004).

Socio-Economic Effects of Youth Unemployment in Nigeria

According to Blanchflower and Freeman (1999), the lack of job prospects and the likelihood of a desolate future for unemployed youths in Nigeria have contributed to socially deviant behaviour such as prostitution, armed robbery, kidnapping for ransom, drugs, political thuggery and so on. Crime and violence have been increasing in many parts of Nigeria among unemployed, young people. Youth gangsterism, is viewed as substitute to families, typically satisfying the economic and social needs of unemployed young people through violence.

According to UN-Habitat (2004b), many young people entered the criminal world at a very young age and end up becoming victims of crime themselves; become criminals as a result of the frustration and helplessness and do anything in order to live and even indulged in killings and robberies, leading to suicides among the unemployed youths.

Impact on Society: Youths are the most active and productive members of the society, and if the majority of them are unemployed then it will negatively affect the society and its other members by way of kidnapping businessmen etc. for ransom (Abudah, 2004).

Impact on the Economy: Unemployed youths are also considered as a burden to the economy, as they contribute nothing and consume the produce. On the other hand, families with unemployed youths and no source of income generation, as in the case of rural areas, face many economic challenges such as unavailability of health, education and water facilities (Asobi, 2004).

Unemployment and Personal Well-being: Unemployment in Nigeria has a very serious negative effect on the personal well-being of the unemployed. In cross sectional regressions there is clear evidence that unemployment is associated with lower levels of psychological wellbeing (Machin & Manning, 1998).

Unemployment and Social Crimes: Unemployment accounts for most of the social crimes perpetrated by youths in the Nigerian society today. The accelerating level of prostitution, armed robbery, rape and all facets of violence can largely be attributed to the incidence of unemployment. According to Guneen (2002), crime is directly connected to high rates of youth unemployment. Akinrinde (2007), asserted that Nigeria becoming more urbanized has increase proportion of armed robbery cases. Diara (2011), opines that the culture of spraying money at social occasions by the rich encourage the poor youths to be involved in armed robbery and other forms of violence.

Unemployment and Economic Growth: The adverse effect of high unemployment on the domestic economy cannot be quantified. The availability of abundant human resources if utilized could serve as great catalyst to economic growth but if otherwise, could exert negative influence on the economy. The unutilized large quantum of human resources in Nigeria due to non-availability of employment opportunities has continued to impede on the prospect of growth in several ways. The resulting effect of unemployment such as perpetration of violence and general insecurity threatens economic growth and development to a large extent.

Government Policies and Efforts towards Reduction in Youth Unemployment

Various policies and programs have been initiated by government at various levels (Federal, State, and Local) over the years to ensure the reduction in youth unemployment. Even international bodies such as the World Bank and IMF have also contributed to the efforts directed at reducing youth unemployment. For instance, a Partnership Strategy that covers a year period from 2014 to 2017 was approved in April 2014 by the Board of executive Directors of the World Bank to assist the Nigerian government. It focused on three key strategies that aim to foster

development, reduce poverty and youth unemployment (The Guardian, Friday 24th of July 2015).

Also, the SURE-P was introduced in February 2012 with a locus on the management and investment of Federal Government savings derived from proceeds accruing from the partial removal of the subsidy on petroleum products. The SURE-P is the flagship of recent efforts to provide job opportunities to graduates of tertiary institutions. It is more or less a range of activities and pragmatic schemes, including the Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS), Community Services Scheme (CSS), Vocational Training Scheme (VTS), and Community Services, Women and Youth Empowerment (CSWYE). Another program initiated was the YQUWIN program which was designed to create job opportunities specifically for graduates of tertiary institutions that elect to go into business as entrepreneurs. Participants were required to develop and execute their own business ideas that will provide them with jobs and other unemployed youths who may or may not be graduates (The Guardian, Friday 24 July 2015). In addition, NPower is also a tool for diversifying the economy. Particularly, N-Power Agro provides not only the means to apply knowledge and science to our farming practices, but also to gather data for effective planning. With the non-graduate category (N-Power Knowledge and N-Power Build), young Nigerians, are trained to build a knowledge economy equipped with world-class skills and certification to become relevant in the domestic and global markets. N-Power also focuses on providing our non-graduates with relevant technical and business skills that enhance their work outlook and livelihood.

Despite all the efforts, youth unemployment remains high. It is obvious that the failure of some of these programs could be attributed to different challenges including inconsistent policies, poor planning, complex structures, inadequate funding, unimpressive responses from would-be trainees, and unqualified resource personnel handling the training programs and above all, corruption on the part of the policy handlers.

Research Methodology

Both primary and secondary data were collected and analyzed to address the research objectives of this study. However, both quantitative and qualitative data were also used for the study. The following are the methods and instrument of data collection.

These are the first-hand data to be used for the study which would be collected through field work. Two basic instruments were used for collecting the primary data. These are:

i. Questionnaires: A carefully designed but wide-ranging questions aimed at eliciting right responses was constructed and piloted in order to detect any abnormalities or inherent problems.

The study makes use of secondary sources. These are second hand or ready-made data collected, organized and presented by other researchers, agencies and government organizations in the form of reports, journals and textbooks. This type of data is critically important for examining the youth and unemployment causes consequences and solutions in Nigeria.

Idah is a town in Kogi State, Nigeria, on the eastern bank of the Niger River in the middle belt region of Nigeria. It is the headquarter of the Igala Kingdom, and also a smaller Local Government Area with an area of 36Km around the town, with a population of 79,815 at the 2006 National Population Census.

A simple random sampling (SRS) was employed in the selection of the sample for this study. A sampling frame of each of the members comprises of youths of Idah Local Government.

$$\frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

n = Sample size

N = Population Size

e = Sampling Error or degree of precision.

If we take our sampling error to be 5% (0.05), we will have our sample as thus

Sampling error = 0.05

Population of Idah Local government = 79,815

$$n = \frac{79,815}{1 + 79,815(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{79,815}{1 + 79,815(0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{79,815}{199,538}$$

n = 400

All the data collected was organized presented and analyzed using both descriptive statistical tools. The opinions of the respondents are presented and analyzed using frequency distribution table and simple percentages.

Discussion and findings

Causes of Youth unemployment in the study area?

Causes of Youth unemployment in the study area?	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Ranking
Bad governance	25	41.7	1 st
Lack of industrial/factories	95	31.7	2 nd
Rapid growth of labour	31	10.3	3 rd
Rapid growth of population	29	9.7	4 th
Lack of employable skills	20	6.7	5 th
Total	300	100	

Source: Field Survey, (2025)

Table above shows the causes of youth unemployment in the study area, 41.7% of the respondents believe that bad governance is the major cause of youth unemployment (ranked 1st). Lack of industries/factories was ranked 2nd. Rapid growth of labour force was rated 3rd. Rapid population growth was ranked 4th and lack of employable skill was ranked 5th

Socio-economic consequence of unemployed youth in the study area

Socio-economic consequence of unemployed youth in the study area	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Ranking
Poverty	150	50	1 st
Kidnapping	60	20	2 nd
Political thuggery	50	16.7	3 rd
Ethno-religious clashes	40	13.3	4 th
Total	300	100	

Source: Field Survey, (2025)

Table above shows socio-economic consequences of youth unemployment, 50% of the respondents believe that poverty is the major socio-economic consequence of unemployed youth, 13.3% believe ethno-religious clashes are the major socio-economic consequence of unemployed youth, 16.7% of the respondents believe that political thuggery are the major socio-economic

consequence of unemployed youth, 20% attest that kidnapping for ransom is the major socio-economic consequence of unemployed youth.

How best can youth unemployment be solved?

How best can youth unemployment be solved?	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Ranking
Setting up industries	-	-	-
Provision credit facilities	-	-	-
Skill acquisition programmes	-	-	-
Improvement in the quality of governance	-	-	-
All of the above	300	100	-
Total	300	100	-

Source: Field Survey, (2025)

In the table above, all of the respondents indicated that setting up of industries, provision of credit facilities skill acquisition programmes and improvement in the quality of governance are means through which unemployment could be solved.

Findings

From the data presented and analyzed above, the following could be deduced:

- i. The single most important cause of unemployment in Idah Local Government Area according to the majority of the respondents is poor quality of governance.
- ii. Other causes of unemployment in Idah Local Government area according to the respondents include lack of industries and factories rapid growth of labour force, lack of employable skill and rapid growth of the population.
- iii. Majority of the respondents indicated that long term unemployment is the most common type of unemployment in Idah local government area of Kogi State.
- iv. The socio-economic consequences of youth unemployment in Idah Local Government Area, in order of ranking as indicated are as follows; poverty, political thuggery and kidnapping for ransom.
- v. The possible solutions to the problem of unemployment in Idah Local Government indicated by the respondents include the following: setting up of industries, provision of credit facilities to the unemployed to start business, improvement in the quality governance and skill acquisition programmes.

Conclusion

Youth unemployment challenges are not peculiar to Nigeria. However, the scale and causes differ from one country to another. The Nigeria case differs because of the vast potential to create jobs existing without the appropriable supportive system. The research work revealed that the type of unemployment in the study area is largely long term in nature. The causes of unemployment are massive corruption, Rapid growth of population, rapid growth of labour force, lack of employable skills and lack of industries. The socio-economic consequences of youth unemployment are political thuggery poverty, and kidnapping for ransom. The solutions to the problem of youth unemployment are setting up of industries, providing credit facilities to unemployed youth, setting up skill acquisition programmes and improvement in the quality of governance.

The findings suggest that setting up industries, provision of credits facilities/soft loans, improvement in quality of governance and skill acquisition programmes are solutions to the problem of youth employment.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendation are made:

1. Idah local government council should try and collaborate with both other levels of government and the private sector to set up cottage (small scale) industries in the local government area in order to create job opportunities for the youths in the local government area.
2. The local government authorities in collaboration with relevant financial Institutions should provide credit facilities and soft loans for prospective youth entrepreneurs.
3. The local government council in Idah local government area in collaboration with the state government and other relevant Non-Governmental Organization (NGOs) should periodically organized youth skill acquisition and empowerment programmes which are key to equipping youths with employable and job creation skills.
4. Improvement in the quality of governance will also help in proffering solutions to unemployment situation in Idah Local Government Area of Kogi State. This will provide the needed conducive socio-economic environment for job creation and unemployment reduction respectively.
5. Realistic population control policies should be put in place by the Kogi State Government in order to mitigate the escalating population growth of the state.

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