

YOUTHS' UNEMPLOYMENT AND CRIME CONTROL: AN ANALYSIS OF NIGERIAN EXPERIENCE

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Abstracts

Sub-Saharan Africa population is characterized with young people. Economic active population group constitutes an average of 53% of the total population of the region for the past two decades as reported by the World Bank (2011). Over 40 % of these youths are without jobs or stable economic income. Also, 64.1% and 50.7% of the region's total youth population live below U.S\$1.2 per day. The implications of characteristics of the population are very important. Youth unemployment is a global problem affecting both developed and developing countries alike. But while the developed countries are taking the threat seriously and restructuring their education and social security systems to abate its growth and escape the eminent catastrophic retrenchments, Nigeria seem not to be doing enough. This paper therefore examines the youths' unemployment situation and its connection to growing crime wave in Nigeria. Literature is extensively reviewed; methodology is based on the exhaustive consultation of journals and records.

Keywords: Unemployment, crime, social problem and youth

Introduction

The standard United Nation (2009) definition which is also used by the International Labour Office (ILO, 2010), classifies "youth" as the young people between 15-24 years old (ILO, 2010). The definition however often varies from country to country. Recent data from the ILO (2012) showed that globally, one person out of every five is between the ages of 15 – 24 years. Altogether, there are over 1.2 billion youth in the world, majority of them (about 80%) live in developing countries, with 60% in Asia, and 17% in Africa (14% from sub-Saharan Africa and 3% from North Africa). While it is generally believed that youthful population is an important asset for innovation and creativity in society, the opposite could be the case if these peculiarities of the youths are not well harnessed (Albert 2000; Gilbert, 2010; Vremudia, 2012).

The trend in youths' engagement in socio-economic activities in developing countries like Nigerian has been a thing of concern with many of them being unemployed. The youth unemployment crisis is not new, what is new is the staggering proportional increase it has reached in the recent time (Egunjobi, (2007); ILO, 2012).

At the 2005 ILO Conference, it was estimated that 66 million young men and women were unemployed throughout the world. However despite efforts to address the crisis, recent evidence suggests that youth around the world continue to face a deteriorating employment situation (Vremudia, 2008). Global youth unemployment has remained high and has reached unprecedented dimensions, aggravated by the global financial and economic crisis and the prospects of slow and uneven recovery. Thus at ILO (2012) Conference, titled "*The youth employment crisis: Time for action*", it was highlighted that the depth and breadth of the youth employment crisis had reached unprecedented proportions and therefore requires urgent attention (ILO, 2012).

Globally, four out of every ten unemployed persons are young women or young men. In some countries, youth unemployment is three times higher than adult unemployment (Vremudia, 2012). Many youth have become pessimistic, feeling powerless to change their situation (Somavia, 2012). ILO 2011 report shows that one in two young persons was actively participating in the labour market. However, unemployment is only one dimension of the youth employment problem. Apart from high levels of unemployment, there is also a decline in the quality of employment available to youth. Many youth end up in situations informal employment and poor working conditions. Thus the challenge is not just to create employment but to create decent work (Alabi and Alanana, 2012; ILO, 2012).

With global unemployment at very high levels, the need to place employment at the centre of economic and social policies has been realized in Africa. The 2006 national census data showed that 20.18% of the Nigerian population were youth aged 15 – 24 years of age (National Population Commission 2006).

To Egunjobi (2007), many social problems such as prostitution, robbery, alcoholism, domestic violence, social, religious and civil unrest and suicide to mention but few, become more severe in times of high unemployment. There is a linkage between unemployment, poverty and crime, when people cannot earn an income from legal, legitimate and social acceptable work/means; they turn to illegal activities. The challenge of social and crime control become a serious issue as the rate of unemployment becomes increasingly unchecked (Alanana, 2003; Oni 2007). The level of insecurity in Nigeria today is rising at an alarming rate. Rubbery, prostitution, bomb blasts, assassinations, religious crises and other criminal

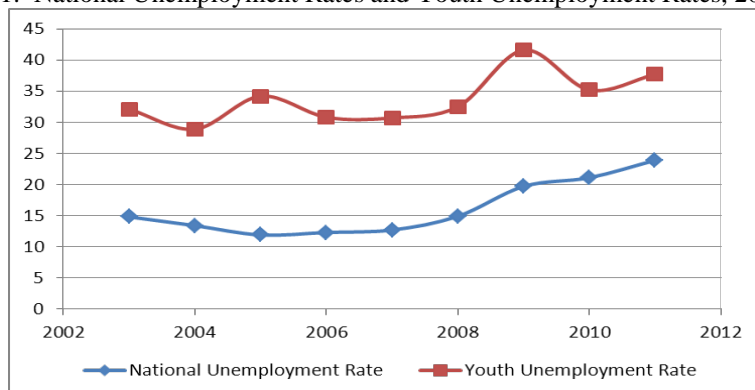
acts have become the order of the day in our once peaceful country. These acts are carried out by no other persons than the youth who are considered to be the future leaders. The question here is: why will the youth of a country resort to criminal acts and even killing and bombing their fellow countrymen and women? The answer to this question is not farfetched. Okafor (2011); Alabi & Alana (2012) contented that poverty, unemployment, frustration, hopelessness, and the total lack of commitment of the leaders to the plight of the struggling Nigerian youths are some of the consequences of youth idleness. Unemployment in Nigeria today has become every youth's nightmare. It is no longer about going to school and graduating or learning a trade, but about how to face the reality of graduating and joining the brigade of the unemployed with no hope of a better tomorrow.

Unemployment coupled with the ever widening social gap are believed to be the reason for youths' engagement in illegal oil bunkering, kidnapping and arms dealing in the Niger Delta (Alabi, and Osagie 2006). Gilbert (2010) equally argues that the religious crises experience in some parts of the country could be traced to high level of youth unemployment and poverty. To this end, this paper seeks to examine the nexus between unemployment and youth criminality and or the challenges faced while controlling crime among the unemployed youths in Nigeria.

Youth Employment: Characteristics And Trends In Nigeria

This section, examines the features of youth unemployment problem in Nigeria. These include; youth unemployment rate as compared to the general unemployment rate. Also, a cross country comparison of unemployment is presented so as to capture Nigeria's youth unemployment problem in relation to the rest of the World. For the purposes of this study, the term youth covers persons aged 15-24 years, while adults refers to persons aged 25 years and above. In figure 1 below, a comparison is made between the youth unemployment rates and the national unemployment rates.

Figure 1: National Unemployment Rates and Youth Unemployment Rates, 2003-2011



Source: National Bureau of Statistics (2012)

The youth unemployment rate has been staggeringly very high in the last ten years compared to the national unemployment rates. There were decreases in some years, but on average the youth unemployment rate is consistently about three times higher than the national average.

In table 1, comparison is made on the youth unemployment rates in Nigeria to some other developed countries

With the exception of Spain, Nigeria's youth unemployment rate was higher in absolute terms than all the other developed countries. The rise in rates in 2010 for many countries has been attributed to the global recession which increased aggregate unemployment rates. However for these countries as from 2011 youth unemployment rates have stabilized or fallen back slightly, perhaps as a result of specific government policies to help young workers (ILO 2011; Vremudia 2012). Compare to sub-Saharan countries, Nigerian youth unemployed is far higher than them. Equally other sub-Saharan African countries maintain a stability while that of Nigeria, though higher than other sub-Saharan African countries increased for 30.7 in 2001 to 35.2 in 2010

Table 1: Youth Unemployment Comparison across Countries

Country/year	Youth Unemployment Rates		% Change 2007-2010
	2007	2010	
Belgium	18.8	22.4	19
Denmark	7.9	13.8	74
Germany	11.7	9.7	-17
Ireland	9.0	27.5	205
Spain	18.2	41.6	19
France	18.9	22.5	19
Italy	20.3	27.8	36.9
Netherlands	5.9	8.7	47.4
Portugal	16.6	22.3	34.3
Sweden	18.8	22.5	19.6
United Kingdom	14.4	19.1	32.6
United States	10.5	18.4	75.2
Sub Sahara Africa	12.8	12.8	0
Nigeria	30.7	35.2	14.6

Source: ILO Global Employment Trends for Youths (2011)

Unemployment Rates by Age

In order to shed more light on the socio-economic conditions of the young people, comparison is made between the youth unemployment rates and adult unemployment rates (those above 24) in Nigeria. According to ILO (2010) when youth unemployment is twice higher than adults, it means unemployment is a challenge for the whole population. However when it is thrice higher or more, then there is a critical youth employment challenge in the country.

Table 2: Unemployment Rates for Youths (15-24) and Adults
(25-44; 45-59; 60-64).

Year	15-24	25-44	45-59	60-64	National Aggregate
2003	32.1	14.7	10.7	13.4	14.8
2004	28.9	11.4	7.7	10.1	13.4
2005	34.2	11.3	6.6	9.7	11.9
2006	30.8	8.8	4.8	7.3	12.3
2007	30.7	8.5	4.5	7.1	12.7
2008	32.6	9.4	7.6	8.3	14.9
2009	41.6	17.0	11.5	16.7	19.7
2010	35.2	20.7	19.9	21.3	21.4
2011	37.7	22.4	18.0	21.4	23.3

Source: National Bureau of Statistics (2011): Annual Socio-economic report (various years)

The unemployment rates of youths (aged 15-24) is consistently higher than those of adults (aged 25 years and over) as shown in table 2 for all the years. This is however not only peculiar to Nigeria as according to ILO (2011), youth unemployment rates are typically higher than adult rates in all regions of the World (ILO 2011). Some reasons have been advanced for this phenomenon.

Table 3: Unemployment Rates by Educational Attainment

	Never Attended School	Primary School	Secondary School	Tertiary (Post Secondary)
2004	12.8	8.7	13.0	9.5
2005	12.5	8.4	14.4	9.8
2009	20.1	14.8	23.8	21.3
2010	17.9	21.8	23.9	23.1
2011	22.4	21.5	20.0	20.2

Source: National Bureau of Statistics (2011): Annual Socioeconomic Reports.

Table 3 show the unemployment rates by educational status. The theoretical belief is that improvement of educational attainment (especially high school attendance) drives down trend in youth labour participation rates (hence unemployment rates). As such, countries with high school improvements will also have largest decline in youth participation. The impact of the change in secondary school attainment on the contemporaneous change in youth employment rates has been observed in several countries (Okafor, 2011). It is thus expected that unemployment rates to be lower for those who never attended school/primary school leavers than for others. Surprisingly the rates are similar for all levels between 2009 and 2011.

Youth as proportion of the population: Available figures show that Africa, compared to other regions of the world, has the largest segment of young people in its population, 36.7 percent in 2000, compared to 27.3 percent for the world (Curtain, 2000). In Africa, it is estimated that young people constitute more than 50 percent of the population of most of its

countries (Chigunta, 2002; Somaya, 2011). In Nigeria, the 2006 Census data showed that Nigeria’s population is a young population with about 44.69% of the population constituting between the age group 0 – 14 years (NBS 2011), while about one-fifth of the population (20.18%) are aged between 15 – 24 years, (comprising 13,774,081 males and 14,560,417 females) (National Population Commission, 2006). However, NBS (2012) estimated the number of unemployed youths as 41.6%. Thus there are more youth females than males youth in the population.

Table 4 Unemployment Rates By Educational Level, Age Group & Sex, 2010 009

ITEMS	Urban	Rural	Composite
All Groups	19.2	19.8	19.7
Age Group			
15-24	49.9	39.6	41.6
25-44	16.3	17.3	17.0
45-59	10.0	12.1	11.5
60-64	18.2	16.2	16.7
Gender			
Male	17.2	16.9	17.0
Female	21.7	23.9	23.3

Source: National Bureau of Statistics 2011

Rural-urban distribution: Most of Nigeria’s youth aged 15-24 live in rural areas sources NBS (2010). Although no breakdown is available by age group, population data shows that the urban population has been increasing rapidly, increasing from 23.4% in 1975 to 48.2% by 2005 and 49.8% in 2009 (International Organization for Migration, 2009). Rural-urban migration involving mainly young educated men and women has contributed largely to the rapid growth of the urban population. Almost half (49.9) of youths living in the urban areas are jobless in Nigeria (NBS 2010).

Education: Available data shows that Nigerian youths are more educated than their parents. Majority of the youth aged 15-24 years are literate, although female youth are less educated than their male counterparts. Recent data from the National Bureau of Statistics (2010) shows that majority of the youth are literate in English and in any language as can be seen from Table 1 below.

Table 5: Adult and Youth Literacy Rates: 2010

Literacy	Male	Female	Male + Female
Youth literacy			
In any language	89.4	81.6	85.6
In English	81.0	71.4	76.3
Adult literacy			
In any language	79.3	63.4	71.6
In English	65.1	50.6	71.6

Source: National Bureau of Statistics, 2010. *The National Literacy Survey*, June 2010.

Youth literacy rate increased from 64.7% in 1985 to its present level in 2010. Enrolment rates at primary and tertiary levels have also been increasing. However, although they are better educated, many of the youth possess few employable skills.

Projections of Nigeria's population growth indicate that the proportion of young persons aged 15-24 years, in relation to the overall population, will continue to grow over the next twenty years. Their large numbers and their higher education levels make it necessary to ensure that youth employment policies are put in place, and that they also target young women (Okojie, 2003).

The Challenge Of Crime Control (Amongst The Youths) In Nigeria

From what is happening around the world today, crime and criminal activities especially among the youths appear to be permanent features of our modern society. Although, crime has been with mankind from creation, there are increasing categories of criminal deeds that are really baffling, senseless, often shocking and vicious. Ever since the biblical Cain killed Abel his younger brother in a classic case of homicide in the Garden of Eden, the world has not known peace and has been oscillating from one horrendous crime to another. The task of protection continues to be increasingly complex one at a time when technology is creating new products at explosive rate. A criminal does not need to have developed the systems of thinking that built the technology in order to use it against humanity (victims). "The spread of knowledge and education had taught mankind little in the way of self control, and less in the act of living peacefully with other men. Thomas 2007, asserted that" Security problems remain universal phenomena and continue to take frightening dimension. Security weakness in itself could be provocative (Olusegun, 2008; Adejumo, 2011).

For many years, man has been pre-occupied with the arduous task of finding the most effective means of countering the menace of crime and criminals. Security implies a stable, relatively predictable environment in which an individual or group may pursue legitimate ends without obstruction or harm and without fear of disturbance or injury. Crime and criminal activities originated from the desire of human to greedily acquire or enjoy opportunities that are not theirs. After all, it is often said that behind every great fortune, there is invariably a crime. Like an Israeli proverb says; "one cannot be rich without making some little compromises with honesty". The pervasive nature of crime and its evil effect on humanity might have been responsible for the issuance of Ten Commandments by the Divine as ordinances to be obeyed by man for peaceful co-existence (Adeyemi 1987; Olusegun 2008; Adejumo, 2011; Okafor, 2011).

Theoretical Framework

One of sociological models that carefully explained the context of unemployment in Nigeria is the theory of surplus value by Marx and Engels (1848) and David McLellan (2009). Marx believed that capitalist societies like Nigeria always had and would have high levels of unemployment. He believed such economies went through cycles- periods of expansion in which there was full employment which were followed by periods of crises during which unemployment rose. Recoveries from crises were only temporary. Marx asserted that capitalist economies worked in a way of favouring the few bourgeoisies, capitalist's property class at the expense of the large proletariat, working non-property class. In Marx's assertion:

"It is in the very nature of the capitalist mode of production to overwork some workers while keeping the rest as a reserve army of unemployed paupers". Marx (1848)

According to Marx, unemployment is inherent within the unstable capitalist system and periodic crises of mass unemployment are to be expected. The function of the proletariat within the capitalist system is to provide a "reserve army of labour" that creates downward pressure on wages. This is accomplished by dividing the proletariat into surplus labour (employees) and under-employment and unemployed as well (McLellan 2009). These reserve army of labour fight among themselves for scarce jobs at lower and lower wages. At first glance, unemployment seems inefficient since unemployed workers do not increase profits. However, unemployment is profitable within the global capitalist system because unemployment lowers wages which are costs from the perspective of the owners. From this perspective low wages benefit the system by reducing economic rents but, it does not benefit workers. Capitalist systems unfairly manipulate the market for labour by perpetuating unemployment which lowers labourers' demands for fair wages. Workers are pitted against one another at the service of increasing profits for owners. In Nigeria context, the Nigerian super-rich politicians together with super-rich capitalists formed a cabal and logically established economic imperialism. Economic and social policies formulated by the government are not in any way of benefit to the common Nigerians. The concept of "*monkey dey work, baboon dey chop*" is well pre-eminent in the country. Workers are living at the mercy of the rich. These have directly and indirectly continue to widen the gap between the rich and the poor. Young people with skills, certificates and energies have nothing to offer as a result of mass unemployment, but dance to the tune of the politicians who in turn used them to manipulate, rig and destabilized elections. In most cases, after they have been used by their politician, they are dumped or left to face their fate whenever the law catches up with. The few available jobs for the

battalion of youth job-seekers are politicized. Unless the job seeker is connected to a political god father he may not get the job.

According to Marx, the only way to permanently eliminate unemployment would be to abolish capitalism and the system of forced competition for wages and then shift to a socialist or communist economic system. For contemporary Marxists, the existence of persistent unemployment is proof of the inability of capitalism to ensure full employment.

Consequences Of Youth Unemployment In Nigeria

Unemployment in Nigeria, as in other African countries has youth and gender dimensions. Employment data for Nigeria presented earlier has shown that majority of the unemployed are youth. High level of unemployment, especially youth unemployment has several negative consequences.

Youth unemployment leads to anti-social behaviours such as: emergence of street children, involvement of youth in crimes and in armed conflict (militancy in the Niger Delta, and currently the Boko Haram crisis which is fuelled by youth unemployment and poverty in addition to religious and other related factors), and increased prostitution among young women, as well as exposure to HIV/AIDS (Curtain, 2000; Chingunta, 2002; Okojie, 2003 Alabi & Alanana 2012). In the Niger Delta, lack of employment opportunities was highly correlated with the high incidences of youth restiveness and conflicts (UNDP, 2006). An unwholesome aspect of youth unemployment and underemployment in many cities in Nigeria is visible 'idleness', whereby youth congregate at bars and eating places to drink, watch football matches, converse or smoke marijuana, for substantial parts of the day (Chingunta, 2002). Such places encourage the development of street gangs and criminal activities. The youth denied of legitimate means of livelihood, grow up in a culture that encourages criminal behaviour. They survive by engaging in various activities such as petty trading, casual work, borrowing, stealing, pick-pocketing, prostitution, touting and other illegal activities (such as internet and financial frauds in Nigeria). Some have become drunkards, others are on drugs such as marijuana Indian helm and other related drug abuse. Unemployed youth roaming the streets have been given various names in different cities, such as "*Area Boys*" *Yan-iska*, *kwanta kwanta* e.t.c in Nigeria (Somavia, 2012).

Youth unemployment has also promoted 'gangsterism'. Many youth now engaged in violence, armed robbery, kidnapping, car snatching, illegal bunkering and fuel sales, and illegal importation of arms, most of which have reached alarming levels in several Nigerian cities. In the South-South Zone especially, youth have formed different gangs engaged in kidnapping,

blowing up of oil pipelines, oil bunkering and operation of illegal refineries, and other criminal activities. Hundreds of jobless and poor youths have died from explosions trying to scoop petrol from broken oil pipelines or overturned oil tankers (Vremodia, 2012).

Among young women, lack of employment opportunities has contributed to increasing feminization poverty. It has also encouraged prostitution as a means of survival in several towns and cities (Somaya 2011). Furthermore, it has encouraged ‘trafficking in women and girls’ across international borders to engage in prostitution. Girls trafficked from Nigeria come mainly from Niger Delta states such as Edo State, Delta, Imo and other states in the Southern part of Nigeria (Gilbert, 2010; Alabi & Alabi 2012). Sometimes, parents or relatives sell these young women and girls to traffickers; they are then trapped within an illegal migration environment where they are exposed to many forms of abuse including bonded labour and forced prostitution. The sex industry is a particular target for traffickers as it offers great profits at the expense of trafficked migrant women. Victims of trafficking are mainly young women between the ages of 17-20 years with some as young as 14 years. (Egwu, 2008). Many of them are exposed to many venerable diseases including HIV/AIDS. Poverty, unemployment and lack of economic prospects, the absence of regular migration opportunities, parental and peer pressures, and misconceptions concerning job prospects in North American and European countries, are among the principal factors giving a push to massive migration of educated as well as educationally and socially disadvantaged youth, including young women, from Nigeria (Alabi & Alabi, 2012; Vremudia, 2012)

Thus youth unemployment poses grave economic and social problems for Nigeria and requires urgent attention. Youth should be made a priority group for employment and poverty reduction programmes.

Conclusion

No nation can achieve growth or any form of stability that will enhance socio-economic development in an atmosphere of chronic youth unemployment. The role of Nigerian government must include the formulation of policies and laws that could help improve the economic and social wellbeing of its citizens and wealth creation. There is a need to increase jobs through small enterprises and poverty alleviation schemes. Economic growth in Nigeria is not the only solution to curb unemployment as the official statistics illustrate that previous unemployment did not decline economic growth. Other solutions such as the provision of right skills to youth should be given an importance. If factors that are responsible for youth unemployment in Nigeria are addressed, youths’ criminality would be reduced.

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