YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT AND NIGERIA'S SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

This study examined the menace of youth unemployment in Nigeria by focusing on factors responsible for the menace as well as its destructive consequences on Nigeria's existence and development. The study relied on the secondary data while content analysis was employed in analyzing the gathered data. Marxist Theory of Unemployment was used as a framework of analysis in this study. The study discovered that the menace of unemployment among youths in Nigeria has significantly affected Youth population psychologically with severe consequences on Nigeria's survival as a country as well as retarding her development aspiration. Youth Unemployment led to Youth involving in Destructive activities such as militancy, insurgency, banditry, political thuggery and other crimes in the society. It is recommended that government should focus its attention to the quality of education so as to produce employable graduates, anti-corruption agencies be given full independence to fight corruption, there should be steady supply of electricity in order to enable industries operate which in turn can generate employment to the teeming youth.

Introduction

Evidence on ground has shown that joblessness has became the order of the day in Nigeria as every nook and cranny of the Nigerian society is with Youth who live without job and this has become one of the fundamental challenges facing Nigeria at the moment. Some years back, Kayode, A. et al. (2014), observed that there was no time in Nigeria' s chequered

history where Youth unemployment is as serious as now. This assertion is particularly more relevant today when majority of Youth Population are jobless and are ever ready to indulge into acts capable of destruction and retarding Nigeria's Development and have significantly contributed to the dramatic rise in criminal activities such as armed robbery (Salami, 2013).

Hope by the Nigerian youth has withered by the day and there is now feeling of frustration about their inability to be employed when he is capable, willing and qualified to work, and as a result, majority of them are no longer able to meet their primary psychological needs (Olakitan, 2015). Every year thousands of graduates are shurn out of school for whom there are no jobs. Nigerian streets are littered with youth hawkers and bike riders who ordinarily would have found gainful employment. If harnessed, the Youth Population in Nigeria would have aided in changing the story from bad to good. Available records has shown no decline in the rate of Youth Unemployment. Writing a decade ago, Awogbenle and Iwuamadi (2010), asserts that the statistics from the Manpower Board and the Federal Bureau of Statistics showed that Nigeria has a youth population of 80 million, representing 60% of the total population of the country. Also, 64 million of them are unemployed, while 1.6 million are under-employed. Also, 40% of the unemployment rate is among urban youth aged 2024 and 31% of the rate is among those aged 15-19. Also, two-thirds of urban unemployed are ranged from 15-24 years old.

This trend continued unabated despite many efforts by the successive governments. Recently, it rose from 27.1 percent to 33.3 percent from December to March 2021, according to the National Bureau of Statistics, NBS (Premium Times, 2021). The daily increase in the rate of unemployment is alarming to the extent that one can rightly argue that the Nigerian state is resting on a time bomb that may sooner or later consume her if this problem is not well managed. Many researchers have shown interest in the rising case of Youth Unemployment but the menace seems to be increasing day by day. In fact, Youth Unemployment is the single most important issue that needs to be arrested if Nigeria wants to survive and development attained. Alanana (2003) contributing to the discussion on Youth Unemployment, studied it's implication in Nigeria while Okafor (2011) focused on the implication of youth Unemployment on Democracy in Nigeria. Furthering the discussion, Uddin and Uddin (2013) dwells on Causes, Effects and Solutions to Youth Unemployment in Nigeria. In their studies, Omoniyi et Al (2016) concentrated on the impact of youth Unemployment on the mental health of Youth and explored the place of agricultural revolution as panacea while Lawretta (2021) paid attention to the effect of youth Unemployment on Nigerian society. This study however, seek to add to the existing body of knowledge by studying the linkage between Youth Unemployment and Nigeria's sustenable development. Therefore the aim of this paper is to:

1. To examine the causes of Youth Unemployment in Nigeria?
2. To find out how youth unemployment poses threat to Nigeria's continued existence
3. To discover the extent to which Youth unemployment hinders effective development in Nigeria.

This paper is structured into five sections. The first section is introduction. This is followed by conceptual clarification, the Third section

dwells on Causes of Youth Unemployment in Nigeria. In section four, Unemployment as a threat to Nigeria's continued existence and Development is considered. The last section is on Conclusion and Recommendation

Conceptual Clarification

Youth

The concept of youth is very difficult to define as there is no universally accepted definition of the concept. The age range of a youth varies from country to country hence defining youth should be based on the country concern. Idris (2016) argued that youth is define in the literature as both an age group and social construct. Youth are also regarded as those individuals that falls between the ages of 15-24 (United Nations, 1992). Those in this category are in the process of passing through childhood to adulthood. In Nigeria like in other countries such as Guinea Bissau, Madagascar, Senegal, Senagal and Togo, Youth are those persons aged between 18-35.

Youth Unemployment

The term youth is vague. Hence, there is no generally agreed definition for it. The definition of youth varies from country to country and culture to culture. The United Nations considers ages between 15 and 24 as youths. Youth is best understood as a period of transition from dependence childhood to adulthood (Akande, 2014). Youth in Nigeria is regarded between the ages of 18 and 35 years. The National Youth Policy document of Federal Republic of Nigeria stipulates the following characteristics of youths: He must be a Nigerian citizen between the ages of 18 and 35 years old, must have completed secondary school education, tertiary education, or learning a trade, he is looking for employment or already employed, he is leaving parental home because of marriage or being independent (Osakwe, 2013).

Youth unemployment is a situation of young people living without an engaged work to earn a living. The International Labor Organization society that were supposed to be part of the economically considers it as the entire population of able people living in a active people but are living without employment and are also willing and available for work (Olawoyin, 2017).

Nigeria's Sustainability

The Word Sustainability here is used to refer to a condition of continued existence. Therefore Nigeria's Sustainability means a state of Nigeria's continuing as a united and one indivisible country.

Development

Development is a broad concept that entails social, economic, political and human development. Human development in the view of Burkey (1993) constitutes the backbone upon which economic and political aspects are based. Development must translate into social development. This implies that development is a positive change that results into a better life and society. Development is a Multifaceted concept that entails for an individual increased skill and capacity while at the state level it has to do a nation been able to use the available resources for the betterment of her population. In this regard, Pearson (1992) observed that development involves an improvement qualitative, quantitative or both in the use of available resources.

Research Methodology

This study is qualitative one that utilized secondary data as such published materials,

journal articles, government publications were used. The sourced data were analyzed by the use of content analysis.

Theoretical Framework

The study adopts the Marxist Theory of Unemployment. The trust of this theory is that Unemployment is as a result of Capitalist setting which was based on capitalist exploitation of wage labour. Karl Marx, in this theory, accepts as true that unemployment is inherent within the unstable capitalist system and periodic crises of mass unemployment are to be expected. However, capitalism, he asserts, unfairly manipulates the labour market by perpetuating unemployment which lowers labourers' demand for fair wages. In other words, workers are marched against one another at the service of increasing profits for owners. In Marx 's conception, the only way out is for the less privilege to wage war against the system thereby overthrowing the system and establish a new setting.

Applying this theory to this study one can understand that in Nigeria the political elites manipulate the masses through subjecting them to abject poverty so that youth can always be a ready tools to be used during elections

Causes of Youth Unemployment

The followings are identified as the causes of Youth Unemployment in Nigeria by scholars such as Echebiri (2005), Ayinde (2008), Awobgenle and Iwuamadi (2010), Okafor (2011) and Uddin and Uddin (2013).

Low Standard of Education

Scholars believed that the educational system in Nigeria is of low quality and as such various institution in the country produced unemployable graduates that possess low skill if any. After all, employers do not need people to pay or spend their money on that will not help their organization grow and make more profit. The unskilled nature of Nigerian graduates prevent them from gainful employment. Okafor (2011) supports this argument by arguing that the outdated school curriculum in Nigeria with no skill acquisition is responsible for unemployment in Nigeria

The expansion of the Educational System

Apart from the low quality graduates, the number of higher institutions in Nigeria is increasing day by day and this led to an increase in the number of graduates shurn out of school yearly while there is no corresponding demand on ground. This compound the issue and led to the menace of youth unemployment in Nigeria. Writing some years back, Manning and Junankar (1998) argued that, the total number of graduates turned out by higher institutions in Nigeria which were 73,339 in 1986/1987 rose to 131,016 in 1996/1997. With over 150 universities (Both public and private) presently, one could imagine the number of graduates been produced yearly.

Rura-Urban Migration

Rural areas nowadays have been experiencing movement of their able-bodied youth from rural areas to urban centers in search of better living condition. The push factors includes pressure resulting from man-land ratio in the rural areas. This is coupled with the fact that, there is concentration of social amenities in the urban centers. This means that the rural societies are neglected in the allocation of social and economic opportunities. Since human being desires good living, urban centers in Nigeria experience influx persons from the rural areas. This exacerbate the already difficult situation of the urban centers by increasing the number of unemployed persons in urban centers. In this

regard, Uddin and Uddin (2013) observed that, the "push pull factors" necessitated the movement of youth from rural areas into the urban centers leading to the youth Unemployment.

Corruption

Corruption is the mother among the factors responsible for youth unemployment in Nigeria. The political leaders from the federal to the local level have turned the commonwealth into the private estates by siphoning Nigerian resources which are meant for the overall development of the country. This practice has led to negligence of all other sectors that suppose to provide employment opportunities to the teeming youth in the country. Those who are rich are very few and they control the resources for their benefit while neglecting the larger segement of the society. Government after government have failed to evolve a good economic policy and political leaders diverts monies meant for development Okafor (2011).

Lack of Steady Electricity

Electricity is a fundamental requirement for the operation of industries in any state. It provides the basic need in any factory. However, in Nigeria electricity supply has remain a mirage because in some quarters there is no electricity throughout the day. Where there is the supply, it is either half current or not always. This affect the activities of industries that can employ the teeming youth in Nigeria. It is a well-known fact that government alone cannot employ all the youth and the factory that supposed to take them died due to lack of electricity. In the word of Uddin and Uddin (2013) lack of electricity discouraged investors from coming into the country let alone investing in Nigeria.

Youth Unemployment Versus Nigeria's continued existence and Development

As observed from the beginning, Unemployment among youth in Nigeria is very serious and it is increasing day by day. This poses a threat to Nigeria as a country and can hinder any meaningful development. Unemployment poses a threat to Nigeria's existence and development in the following ways.

To begin with, the unemployed status of most Nigerian Youth affect their psychology. Anger, sadness, confusion, stress and depression are some of the emotions of most if not all unemployed youth in Nigeria. The lack of enough money to meet basic needs such as providing food and shelter is demoralizing for the individual (Lawretta, 2021). In addition, an already stressed and worried individual without a job usually finds it difficult to socialize and as a result, individual experiences boredom and tend to devalue life (Dewitte, Rothmann & Jackson, 2012). Doreo (2013) studied the psychological effect of unemployment on individual and he concluded that, it has a damaging impact on the psychology of the individual concern.

Flowing from above submission, an unemployed youth is a ready tool to be used by Nigerian Politicians. Due to the fact that every individual has some basic needs (food, shelter and clothing) without which he cannot survive, he became an instrument for greedy politicians who seek to obtain political power by whatever means. According to Okafor (2011), when large number of youth are unemployed their quest to survive may make them to become willing tool in the hands of maverick and disgruntled politicians who may want to use them for anti-social and clandestine political activities. It is worthy of note that these youth are normally

provided with all sorts of weapons by politicians which they use against the opponents of their masters. After election, these weapons remain in their hand and as such they resorted to using them in destabilizing the country. This act is alarming and can lead to the destruction of lives and properties which adverse effect on Nigeria's survival and development.

Apart from this, another way unemployment among youth is posing a threat to the survival of Nigeria is the fact they (unemployed youth) became local militants, members insurgent group as well as Bandits. In this regard, Okafor (2011) observed that unemployed youth have been used as local militants to attack, bomb and destroy oil pipelines, lives and property in the Nigeria Delta region of Nigeria. Youth constituted larger population of the militant in the area who have been terrorizing and kidnapping both the expatriate and local oil workers and demanding ransom (Epelle, 2010). Youth in the Northeastern Nigeria also engaged in act of terrorism that significantly destroyed the region and undermine its development. In the Northwestern Nigeria, Youth without meaningful jobs also engage in acts of destabilizing that part of Nigeria. This activity is capable of destroying Nigeria because as it is today, the destructive activities of unemployed youth is retarding her development. Buttressing this point further, Ejikeme (2014) concluded that Youth Unemployment and poverty in Nigeria has direct link to the security challenges bedeviling the country.

Okafor (2011) argued that when youth are unemployed, they can easily involve in antisocial acts such as arson, assault, murder, abduction, stealing, armed robbery, sex offences, unlawful possession of arms and so on. This is very disastrous to Nigeria as no one can rightly predict what would happen in future when this situation is not arrested as early as possible.

In addition to the security threat posed by Youth Unemployment, Muhammad, Inuwa and Oye (2011) observed that Youth Unemployment has an enormous effect (over 65%) on the making of the Nigerian GDP and there exist an inverse relationship between unemployment and gross domestic product. As argued by this scholars, when unemployment increases, gross domestic product falls. This implies that the majority of the population who are jobless cannot contribute to the GDP due to the fact that they have nothing doing.

Discussion of Findings

From the study, it has been understood that Youth are the backbone of any society that suppose to play a vital role in the development of their society. In Nigeria, Youth being the energetic and strong section of the society remain without job and this has serious consequences on her existence and development.

It has been discovered by this study that the causes of youth unemployment in Nigeria include low quality of education, increasing number of higher institutions without corresponding job opportunities, corruption, lack of steady electricity supply among others.

The study found out that Youth unemployment can result in disintegrating and destroying the Nigerian state and also retarded her development. The destructive effect of Youth Unemployment is seen in the fact that Youth have resorted to activities such as Political Thuggery, Militancy in the Niger Delta region, being members of the insurgent group, banditry among others. This acts are destructive because when youth possess weapons nobody knows what will happen next as they can engage in whatever they like because of their psychological trauma occasioned by being unemployed.

It can also be argued as discovered by this study that anti-social acts such as arm robbery, kidnaping and other behaviors in Nigerian society are mostly carried out by Unemployed Youth that supposed to be somewhere contributing their quarter in developing Nigeria but because they are unemployed they cannot.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that Nigeria's major challenge as a country is Youth Unemployment. For decades, the country has been bedeviling with this issue despite many attempts by governments at all levels. The unemployed youth are very dangerous to the society because they can destroy the society if care is not taken. Considering the current unemployed status of most youth in the society, one can rightly submit that Nigeria is presently sitting on a time bomb that can explore sooner or later. This is despite the fact that is rich in numerous mineral resources dispersed across different parts of the country.

The findings of this study are some how similar to that of Okafor (2011) who argued that the menace of youth Unemployment undermined the stability of Nigerian Democracy. The study also concord with that of Obele (2019) that Unemployment had negatively impacted on economic growth in Nigeria. The destructive activities by youth such as involving insurgency, kidnapping, political thuggey among others as discovered by this study agreed with the findings of Lawretta 2022). Therefore, serious and timely efforts be made so as to arrest the issue of youth Unemployment before it degenerate to uncontrollably state.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following are recommended;

Youth on their part should note that they are leaders of tomorrow therefore should not allow themselves to be used by anybody for his selfish interest.

Government at all levels should ensure that the educational system be standardized through providing essential facilities needed by our higher institutions to produced skilled graduates. School curriculum should be structured in such a way that graduates should have entrepreneurship skills that they can rely upon after graduation without necessarily relying on government after graduation.

Corresponding job opportunities should be provided by government. This can be done through providing enabling environment for private individuals to establish industries and by government directly establishing factories.

More attention be focused on agriculture so as to absorb the teeming youth in the country. Closely related is for government to make sure that institutions fighting corruption in the country are positioned and given the required independence to carry out their anticorruption crusade so as to cleanse the society of corrupt activities in all sectors.

There should be steady electricity supply as without it, industries cannot flourish let alone employing youth.

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