
YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT AND ITS SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the socio-economic implications of youth unemployment in Nigeria as well as its causes and implications. Youths are very important stakeholder in any society. They are not only the future of Nigeria, but also a major stakeholder and useful resource in nation building. However, available data show that youth unemployment is very prevalent in Nigeria with far reaching implications for stability of the economy. Unemployment has a negative multiplier effect not only on the individual involved but on the society as a whole. This paper identifies the main causes of youth unemployment in Nigeria which are; adoption of untimely economic policy measures, wrong impression about technical and vocational studies, the neglect of the agricultural sector, poor educational Planning and poor enabling environment, anchoring the explanation of the causes of these youth unemployment on neo-liberalism that created economic and social dislocations. The paper argues that many anti-social activities such as political thuggery, militancy, restiveness and other social vices evident among the unemployed and jobless youths are real dangers to the stability of the country. Youth unemployment has been identified as one of the core causes of the rising level of social disorder and insecurity permeating the entire country of Nigeria. The paper concludes that addressing the problem of youth unemployment must involve all the stakeholders. Suggestive from the analysis therefore are that effective policy measures such as Re – prioritization of the Agricultural Sector, reformation of educational system and Provision of Enabling Environment that will drastically reduce unemployment and poverty should be adopted to eradicate the menace of youth unemployment.

Keywords: *Socio-economic, Youth, Unemployment*

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria, with half the population of West Africa and a vast spread of natural resource endowment, has the potential to be the source of growth and prosperity for the whole region. Nigeria's current economic under-performance is erratic and short of expectations, such that 66% of Nigeria's citizens, educated youths especially, live below the international poverty line, at just \$1.00 a day or \$300.00 a year (Omotosho, 2009). This is an indication that the nation of Nigeria over the years has gradually disintegrated from its highly buoyant and respected position among developing nations of the south. Available records (Ipaye, 1998; ISHR, 2006) show clearly that in the two preceding decades of the independence of Nigeria as a sovereign nation (1960s, 1970s), unemployment and its attendant consequence-poverty were not of national concern as they are today. The nation's agricultural, industrial and the then bubbling public service sectors were able to effectively absorb most of the labour force. The agricultural sector, for instance, generated about 70% of the nation's employment opportunities and accounted for about 8% of the Gross Domestic Product (ISHR, 2006). With the advent of petroleum products

and the crude oil in the mid 70s, the economy was further strengthened as it grew at an average of over 11% revenue. The ensuring political instability and inconsistencies in the socio-economic and educational policies of successive governments, however, emerged as major factors that led to the manifestation of high level of joblessness in Nigeria. Nigeria is economically under-productive, relative to its potential for significant development (Omotosho , 2009). Again, Nigeria's capacity to employ its own population seems to diminish progressively despite the country's quantifiable fiscal ability resulting from the production and sale of oil. The level of unemployment in Nigeria appears to grow geometrically every year, in contrast to its regional neighbours most of who have far less resources. Anameza, (2000), stated that Nigeria will have no prospect of measurable development or of improving the welfare of its people; unless it enhances the chances of employment for its graduates. The World Bank (1993) reported that continuously enhanced employment and productivity have been central to the brilliant performance of the so-called "Asian Tigers" and Japan. This implies that absence of such enhanced employment visibly retards Nigeria's chances. Therefore it can be deduced that correspondingly, high productivity stimulates both global balances of powers, which affect Nigeria and its people, as well as the direction of world resources, such as labour. The unemployment problem in Nigeria remains persistent and even growing by the day with a labour force approximately 3 million persons (mostly youths) annually moving into job market (Adelodun, 2006). Statistics of Nigerian unemployment seems to consist, not of uneducated, rural populations, who have been uprooted by failing agricultural production resulting from the absence of mechanisation and decreasing incomes but also of some highly educated populations, as well, who normally, would form the core of the productive vanguard in a developing country. In other words, many of Nigeria's unemployed and consequently poor are well educated even by European and American standards. Nigeria's underemployment and low productivity constitute a vicious cycle that explains the endemic poverty in the country.

Overall, unemployment in Nigeria has affected youths from a broad spectrum of socioeconomic groups, both the well and less well educated, although it has particularly stricken a substantial fraction of youths from low income backgrounds and limited education. From the foregoing, it is obvious that unemployment, especially the unemployment of graduates, impedes Nigeria's progress in many ways. Apart from economic waste, it also constitutes danger for political stability (Ipaye, 1998). It is disturbing to note that Nigeria's graduates have limited chances of becoming gainfully employed. It is even more disheartening that the country's economic condition is such that, it is hardly able to absorb an optimal proportion of the production of its own educational system. Gone were the days when employers go about looking for employees. It is now the turn of employees to move from one office to the other seeking non-existent jobs. These days thousands of young people are found waiting to be interviewed for just one, two or few vacant positions in some organisations or firms. Most people who cannot earn their living are prone to social vices. They look at themselves as second-class citizens for being unable to contribute to the society. The state of unemployment can even lead to depression, low self-esteem, frustration and a number of other negative consequences (Ipaye, 1998). Youth employment is a crucial issue in Nigeria because the youth constitute a major part of the labour force and they have innovative ideas, which among other factors are important in the development process of the country. A large proportion

of the youths however are unemployed. The negative consequences include psychological problems of frustration, depression, hostility and gradual drift of some visible unemployed youths into all manner of criminal behaviour (Okafor, 2011). The menace of unemployment has increasingly been recognized as one of the socio-economic problems currently facing many developing countries like Nigeria and Africa as a whole. Unemployment in Nigeria is indeed a pathetic situation that calls for urgent attention, to address these socio-economic effects accompanied by it. The rest of the paper is structured as follows after the introduction. Section (II) examines the concepts and theoretical frame work. Section (III) Discusses unemployment distribution in Nigeria. Section (IV) Causes of Unemployment in Nigeria. Section (V) Discusses the Socio-Economic Implications of Unemployment in Nigeria. Section (VI) Overcoming the Hurdles of Unemployment Predicament in Nigeria; whilst the last section is the Conclusion.

CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

There seems to be a consensus on the definition of unemployment. 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 (World Bank, 1998). Although there seems to be convergence on this concept, its applications have been bedeviled with series of problems across countries. First, most published unemployment rates are recorded open unemployment. People's attitude on this varies from country to country. While this may be high in developed countries and where government is committed to resolving unemployment problems, it is likely to be very low in countries with the opposite attributes. Okafor (2011) also pointed out the problem arising from the concept of labour force. In most countries, particularly Nigeria, people below the age of 15 years and those above the age of 55, who are actively engaged in economic activities, is usually excluded from labour statistical surveys. All these factors have the tendency to result in underestimation of unemployment thereby making international comparison very difficult. Factors such as the preponderance of full housewives (but who are willing to be engaged in paid job) and unpaid family workers also contribute significantly to the underestimation of unemployment.

In the field of Economics, distinction is often made between the various types and states of unemployment. In this section, the paper considers the relevant issues of frictional, structural and cyclical issues of unemployment; disguised and under – employment cases of this phenomenon. Reflection is also made on the crucial cases of long – term unemployment, duration dependence and unemployment persistence; with attention equally given to the micro foundations of unemployment incidence which sheds light on Classical and Keynesian analysis of unemployment phenomenon. Frictional unemployment may be regarded as subset of structural unemployment, mainly reflecting temporary unemployment spells as a result of job search and matching difficulties in connection with quits, new entries to the labour market, and job separation because of employers' dissatisfaction with the individual workers (Lindbeck, 1999). Ordinarily, this kind of unemployment does not usually pose much threat to individual's welfare, as it is temporary in nature. However, the situation in Nigeria is that of frictional unemployment growing into a long - term unemployment and thereby resulting into a stable state of unemployment (Tairu, 2003). This is often described as equilibrium unemployment.

Equilibrium unemployment is inimical to the economic system as the excess of labour supply over demand often lasts for a long time. This to a large extent describes the so-called structural unemployment. The stability of unemployment under a structural setting usually remains undisturbed until certain economic parameters undergo some fundamental changes. This is given the fact that this unemployment scenario is often characterized by structural shifts. Structural unemployment refers to a mismatch of job vacancies with the supply of labour available, caused by shifts in the structure of the economy (Bannock et al, 1998). Although, the "unemployment state of rest" that characterizes structural unemployment phenomenon seems to describe the situation of unemployment in Africa; but this unemployment equilibrium does not necessarily result from a situation of a mismatch between job vacancies and labour supply. It is rather a state of non-availability of jobs for those thrown out of jobs and for the new entrants. The unemployment situation in Nigeria, Mali, Cameroon, Niger and a number of other countries in the sub-region can therefore be described as that of long-term frictional unemployment rather than structural unemployment. Changes in the economic structures over the years have been very slow and insignificant. Cyclical unemployment is associated with business cycles. It surfaces during the periods of economic depressions and disappears at the times of troughs and booms. Cyclical unemployment differs from structural and frictional unemployment by basically being tied to short-term economic fluctuations (Lindbeck, 1999).

It is an unemployment resulting from lack of aggregate demand in a downswing in the business cycle (Bannock et al, 1998). In most African economies, the issue of business cycle is actually not too relevant. This is because, such terminology is heard of probably within the oil sector only. For instance, in Nigeria, since the collapse of oil boom in the late seventies, the economy has generally remained in a passive state even though some other periods of oil price surge were later experienced. What sounds like cyclical unemployment in most African economies is the seasonal unemployment that is inherent in the agricultural sector. If at all the generally declining economic growth in Nigeria is described as a cycle, then, it may be best described as the very long Kondratieff cycle which lasts for over a period of 50 years (Tairu, 2003). The classical case of unemployment is premised on the inflexibility of wages. They (Classicalist) argued that unemployment results because organized activities do not allow wages to decline for the accommodation of excess labour when there is incidence of unemployment. Given wage-price flexibility, there are automatic forces in the economic system that tends to maximize full employment and produce output at that level. Thus, full employment is regarded as a normal situation and any deviation from this is something abnormal that automatically tends towards full employment. Unemployment incidence from classical perspective cannot really be situated in most African economies like Nigeria. Although, price flexibility is not actually feasible due to trade union activities, but its existence wouldn't have efficiently addressed the problem of unemployment. This is because, in Nigeria for instance, most sectors if not all, and especially the public sector enterprises have the problem of labour redundancy due to over staffing. Macroeconomic models of structural unemployment assume that unemployed workers are not able or willing to get jobs by underbidding the prevailing wages of incumbent workers. The most obvious microeconomic explanation of the absence of wage underbidding is perhaps the minimum wage laws. But, there seems to be rather general agreement among labour market

economists that minimum wages have not been high enough in recent decades in developed countries (developing countries alike) to explain much of aggregate structural unemployment (Lindbeck, 1999). So, the problem is not that of wage price inflexibility or wage underbidding declination but that of poor economic growth that is unable to sustain the population and labour supply growth rates. The Keynesian economists see unemployment as a situation in which the number of people able and are willing to work at prevailing wage exceeds the number of jobs available; and at the same time, firms are unable to sell all the goods they would like (Bannock et al, 1998). When carefully analyzed, the Keynesian unemployment largely applies to the situation in Nigeria. It can be established that one of the factors accounting for this ugly trend is the unpatriotic taste of many Nigerian consumers including the government that indirectly exports jobs abroad at the expense of the domestic economy. By way of the uncontrolled foreign tastes for virtually all commodities, the domestic producers are faced with the problem of low demand that naturally forces them to lower output and of course reduce work force. This experience continues in some firms especially the small scale ones till they are pushed out of the market resulting in the loss of more jobs. While disguised and under unemployment describes the incidence of under paid jobs, the long – term unemployment is a disturbing state of unemployment where the unemployed remains in the labour market for too long and thereby reducing his chances of job finding. Virtually all countries exhibit negative duration dependence; that is, if one takes two unemployed people at random, one would expect that one with shorter unemployment duration to leave unemployment more quickly (Machin and Manning, 1998). This results in unemployment persistence. It is a core problem in Africa that has forced many graduate job seekers to take to under – paid and menial jobs (disguised and under – employment incidence). This is one of the main characteristics (nature) of the unemployment situation in Nigeria and shall therefore be given appropriate attention in the next section.

METHODOLOGY

This paper employed the use of analytical method in carrying out the analysis of the work. This involves theoretically examining the basic causes of youth unemployment in Nigeria and its socio-economic implications in Nigeria

UNEMPLOYMENT DISTRIBUTION IN NIGERIA

The unemployment incidence in Nigeria affects the job seekers within the ages of 20 – 24 and 25 – 44 years more while there is less incidence of unemployment within the ages of 15 – 19, 55 – 59 and 65 years and above. The age distribution of unemployment signals a great threat to the domestic economy and the survival of the Nigerian nation. This is because many energetic youths with dynamic resources wonder around without gainful engagements. For instance, in December 1998, the urban centre unemployment within the age bracket of 25 – 44 years was as high as 48.8 percent for males and 42.9 percent for females while the rural centres recorded 36.9 percent for males and 33.3 percent for females (Tairu, 2003). In December 1999, a figure of 41.5 and 29.8 percent were recorded for males and females unemployment rate respectively while the corresponding time in 2000 had a record of 36.1 percent for male job seekers and 34.9 for females in the urban centres. In the rural centres, official records in December 1999 indicated a total of 27.6 and 27.8 percent unemployment rate for males and females respectively. The 2000 figure saw the rate for males increasing slightly to 32.2 percent with a slight

decrease in female unemployment to 26.4 percent. The secondary school leavers were worse hit by the unemployment crisis. In December 1998, a total of 66.3 percent of male and 62.0 percent of female unemployment were recorded at the urban centres while the rural centres had an estimate of 47.1 and 45.1 male and female job seekers respectively. As at December 1999, school leavers unemployment rate had risen to 67.0 for males and 68.8 percent for females in the urban centres while the rural centres was as high as 59.1 and 55.7 percent for males and females respectively. As at December 2000, there was a marginal decrease in urban centres school leavers' unemployment to 61.5 and 68.1 percent for males and females respectively. A similar trend was recorded at the rural centres that put the figures at 46.7 percent for male job seekers and 49.3 percent for the females. For the Polytechnic and University graduates, the data shows a relatively low unemployment rate as compared to the school leavers' experience. For instance, during the period under investigation, a peak of 14.0-percentage rate of unemployment was recorded for Polytechnic female graduates in 1998 while the male graduate records had its peak in 1999 with 15.0-percentage point in the urban areas. The rural area had a relatively lower unemployment rate of 6.3 percent for male job seekers and 5.6 percent for females. The University graduate unemployment rate in the urban centres had 8.5 percent record high in September 1999 for males and 4.5 percent in June 1999 for females during the period under investigation (Tairu, 2003). It should be noted however, that unofficial sources estimate of graduate unemployment in Nigeria sharply differs from the official estimate. For instance, unofficial statistics peaks graduate unemployment at over 30 percent in the urban centres as against official estimate of 15.0 percent during the period under investigation.

The factors accounting for the sharp difference had been enumerated earlier. The trend in the unemployment rate of primary school leavers and persons without formal education seems to be generally different from other levels of unemployment. While school leavers and graduate unemployment phenomenon is more concentrated in the urban areas, unemployed primary school leavers and persons without education job seekers are found more in the rural areas than in the urban centres. Uneducated person's unemployment reached its peak in 1998 with 37.2 percentage points for females and 24.8 percent for males in March 1999. The two peaks were recorded in the rural centres. While the male primary school leavers' unemployment rate peaked at 30.0 percent in June 1999, the female record peaked at 29.5 percent in December 2000 with both peaks equally recorded in the rural areas. The higher number of unemployed primary school leavers and uneducated persons in the rural areas is explained by the lack of competitiveness of such job seekers in the urban centres where school leavers have taken over virtually all the jobs opportunities available to them. Overall unemployment rate amounted to 19.7% of total Labour Force in March 2009, indicating a sharp increase from 14.9% in March 2008. When disaggregated by sector, gave 19.2% for Urban and 19.8% for the Rural. The national unemployment rate as at 2011 stood at 23.9 %.(See Table 1).

Table 1: National Unemployment Rates (1995 - 2011)

Year	Rates
1995	5.5
1996	8.9
1997	8.6
1998	7.7
1999	8.3
2000	13.1
2001	13.6
2002	12.6
2003	14.8
2004	13.4
2005	11.9
2006	12.3
2007	12.7
2008	14.9
2009	19.7
2010	21.1
2011	23.9

Source: National Bureau of Statistics, 2012

CAUSES OF UNEMPLOYMENT IN NIGERIA

The traditional theories of unemployment discussed earlier provided a good framework for our understanding of the causes of unemployment in an economy. As the Nigerian case has demonstrated, these theories cannot best explain the major causes of Nigeria's unemployment problem (Gbosi, 2005). In recent years, several factors have been identified to be responsible for the problem. These factors include poor economic growth rate, adoption of untimely economic policy measures, wrong impression about technical and vocational studies, the neglect of the agricultural sector, and poor enabling environment we analyze each of them in the discussion that follows:

Poor Educational Planning

It is a widely held view that the high rate of unemployment among our graduates is traceable to our educational system. The architects of this view believe that our educational system does not equip our graduates with adequate skills and tools necessary for them to meet societal needs. They also contended that our educational system is faulty because it does not prepare the graduates for self employment (Obi, 1980). In the view of Gbosi (2005), the nature of unemployment in Nigeria is not only traceable to the Keynesian prescription or instability of effective demand; rather, it is mainly due to the lack of what he called fundamental disequilibrium. This is because the problem comes from 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. It has also been observed that the current proliferation of higher educational institutions and those seeking higher education for white-collar jobs is the main factor responsible for the problem (Gbosi, 2005). This is closely related to the problem of mismatch between educational and economic planning. Consequently, the rate of graduates turn out rises faster than the expansion of job opportunities. Gbosi (2005) further observed that, our educational system is liberal arts-biased. Every year, our higher educational institutions turn out thousands of liberal arts graduates who are not in higher demand in the labour market. We thus have an influx of graduates into the already saturated labour market. Most of these school leavers apparently could not find jobs. Consequently, they joined the array reserves of the unemployed. This is the situation Nigeria finds herself today.

Adoption of Untimely Economic Policy Measures

Another crucial factor that has elicited unemployment problem overtime is the demise of the small scale and cottage industries – which operated in both formal and informal sectors. Following the introduction of the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) in September 1986 that ushered in liberalization, deregulation and the devaluation program of the domestic currency, many of the teething domestic firms collapsed. That resulted in the loss of many jobs and thereby rendering many people unemployed. Although, these policies were designed to jump - start the growth of the economy, but given the structure of the Nigerian economy, some of the policy packages became out rightly inimical to the system due to their untimeliness.

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). A large number of job seekers lack practical skills that could enhance self - employment. That is why rather than providing jobs for others, the graduate unemployed persons keep depending on the government and the non – vibrant private sector for job offers.

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, unfortunately, in the wake of oil discovery, the attention on this anchor of the economy was gradually drawn away to the oil sector where employment capacity is very low. The resulting effect is the large number of job seekers who have no place in the oil industry. Even with the expansion of the industry, unemployment has continued to grow at an alarming rate.

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. This, coupled with poor security environment has continued to hamper investment drives and thereby reducing the prospects of employment generation. Many job seekers who would have embarked on self - employment programs are unable to do so because of the hostile

production environment. Others who make attempt are forced to wind up due to absence of infrastructures and the overall heat of the investment environment.

Unstable Political Environment

It is important to know that we cannot separate politics from economics. A stable political environment usually enhances macroeconomic stability. Today, however, many developing countries are characterized by military coups, inter-tribal warfare, border disputes and complete breakdown of law and order. The latter has been very frequent in Nigeria in recent years. The youth restiveness in some communities in the Niger Delta today deserves a special mention. It has been observed that political stability usually attracts foreign investment. Actually, 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 Product (GDP). This is because foreign investment brings about foreign exchange. As a result, it leads to creation of new employment opportunities, thereby developing new skills. From the standpoint of national economic benefit, the core of the case for encouraging inflow of capital is the increase in real income arising from the investment, which is greater than the resultant income of the investor (Meier, 1988). As the Nigerian case has demonstrated, the country has been relatively politically unstable as a result of large-scale bribery scandal against our lawmakers (Gbosi, 2005). As a result, many countries fear coming to do business in Nigeria. Specifically, no foreign government will allow its citizens to go and do business in a country that is politically unstable. To this effect, all the benefits associated with foreign investment will be drastically reduced especially that of creating new employment opportunities. From the analysis, it can be observed that Nigeria's current unemployment problem is caused by a combination of economic, social and political factors. Infact, Bajoma (1996) has classified the causes of unemployment in Nigeria into three major categories. They are economic causes of unemployment, social causes of unemployment and political causes of unemployment. Under the economic causes of unemployment in Nigeria, he included factors such as the legacy of colonial rule, the oil boom era (1974 – 1981), and consumption pattern. Social causes of unemployment include factors such as rural – urban migration, demographic factors and educational factors. Finally, the political causes of unemployment include political instability, ethnicity problem, emigrants from neighbouring countries and the political economy of unemployment.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS OF UNEMPLOYMENT IN NIGERIA

The socio-economic effects of unemployment in Nigeria, like most other African countries is very severe and threatening to the citizenry and the economy as a whole. The unemployment episode has continued to pose so many challenges to the survival of the Nigerian nation. While some of these consequences bother directly on the unemployed, others like epidemics are limitless in effects. These socio-economic effects that results from unemployment are discussed below.

Unemployment and Personal Well – Being

Unemployment in Nigeria has a very serious negative effect on the personal well – being of the unemployed. Until recently when a very small number of the affected people benefited from the poverty reduction program of the government, the effect was quite severe on those involved. In cross sectional regressions, there is clear evidence that unemployment is associated with lower levels of psychological well – being (Machin and

Manning, 1998). The unemployed is somewhat worse than being divorced in its effect on subjective measures of personal well – being. Unemployment dehumanizes the unemployed and causes partial or total loss of esteem among peers. The unemployed feels inferior before his peer group and sees life as totally demeaning. This is the situation of many of the Nigerian job seekers.

Unemployment and Poverty

One of the core causes of poverty in Nigeria today is the inability of many job seekers to secure gainful employment. This has further worsened the income inequality crisis that characterizes most African economies. Largely, the increasing level of unemployment can explain the increasing level of poverty in Nigeria for which available information currently puts at 70 percent. This ugly trend of unemployment rate in the face of rising cost of living, has conditioned many people to a very low and undignified standard of living in Nigeria and the African region as a whole.

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 be largely attributed to the incidence of unemployment. An examination of most of the apprehended criminals shows that a large number of youths that engage in criminal activities are those without gainful employment. Some of these criminals are people who have the potentials for gainful employment but have been denied such opportunity. Unemployment then can be seen as one of the core causes of the rising level of social disorder and insecurity permeating the entire country of Nigeria.

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. Therefore, rather than being a source of growth stimulation, the army of the unemployed remains a potential threat to the well – being of the economy. It's imperative to note that at a social level, prolonged unemployment usually results in some form of social pathology, as reflected by an increased crime rate and violent agitators. It breeds discontent against the state, and any slight provocative issue or incident may trigger violent demonstrations and social unrest, which may result in loss of life and damage to property, if the situation is not handled properly by the authorities.

OVERCOMING THE HURDLES OF UNEMPLOYMENT PREDICAMENT IN NIGERIA

One of the most crucial challenges facing Nigerian economy today is the formulation of effective policy measures that will drastically reduce unemployment and poverty. Given the damnable implications of this phenomenon in an economy, it is apparently clear that no country would allow this episode to uninterruptedly proceed without mitigation. Therefore in the continuous effort towards unemployment reduction in African economies especially in Nigeria, the following suggested policy measures are very useful.

Employment Generation through Educational System Restructuring

Given the high level of unemployment in Nigeria, the development of entrepreneurial skills and initiatives should be of paramount importance especially in the higher education sector in order to facilitate the employability of graduates who will increasingly be called upon to be not only job seekers, but above all to be job creators (Okebukola, 2001). Nigeria is at its lowest ebb in human capital development and utilization because of its inadequate educational system which tends to produce more of those who lack job skills for employment than those the economy requires to remain vibrant. In view of this, to attack unemployment then, there is the need to restructure the educational system in respect of manpower production for the needs of the economy. Vocational skills should be given high priority, as it is capable of generating self – employment. The technological institutions in the country should be properly funded and equipped to ensure efficiency. Prior to entrance into the higher institutions, college students should be made to understand the implications of large number of people acquiring academic certificates without practical skills in the present Nigerian economy. This would motivate the young people to opt for disciplines that would earn them job independence afterwards.

Provision of Enabling Environment

The poor state of infrastructure in Nigeria has continued to remain a monumental problem to the Nigerian economic growth and development in all facets. Self - engagement is seriously inhibited due to poor or lack of infrastructures; hence, the dependence of virtually all the unemployed persons on the government. The economic environment has continued to remain hostile to cottage, small and medium scale industries. There is the need for the government to efficiently meet the challenges of infrastructural development in the entire country as this will help to launch the private sector into full potentials. This will stimulate private investment and induce remarkable economic growth much more than government direct involvement in investment. This is because the empirical evidence for most African countries indicates that private investment has a significantly stronger effect on growth than does government investment probably because it is more efficient and perhaps less closely associated with corruption (Tairu, 2003).

Re – prioritization of the Agricultural Sector

Nigeria is primarily an agrarian economy. The current unemployment challenges demand that the agricultural sector should be prioritized again. This can be done not necessarily through the erstwhile cheap money policy program or the like but through the actualization of the resource ownership clamour as this would send the currently indolent zones in the country back to agriculture for which they have abundant resource endowment.

Discouragement of Exports of Jobs

The taste of most Nigerians encourages the export of jobs to other countries at the expense of the domestic economy. The taste orientation of the Nigerian consumers largely inhibits the growth of the domestic firms, which would have created employment opportunities. Every Nigerian consumer must join the war against unemployment by halting the inordinate desire for foreign products for which substitutes are available in Nigeria. The consumers must borrow leaf from the patriotism of the Chinese consumers

by developing taste and patronizing the locally made goods. By so doing, the market would be expanded and employment opportunities would be created.

Appropriating Economic Growth Prospects

One of the most important means of reducing unemployment phenomena in Nigeria today is the acceleration of the growth capacity of the economy. Over the years, the performance of the Nigerian economy has been far below expectation; thereby reducing the chances of the utilization of both human and material resources. Therefore, the need to stimulate economic growth in Nigeria with the utmost commitment cannot be over emphasized. The way forward is the diversification of the economy. This can be achieved through the dismantling of the current pseudo federalism that encourages indolence and absolute dependence on oil. Nigerian government should as a matter of urgency imbibe the spirit of true federalism by institutionalizing resource ownership for the country's resource management and reducing the inordinate urge for central power control that induces much political violence. In So doing, regional development, healthy competition and economic diversification will be achieved. This is will greatly improve the growth process of the economy and generate employment opportunities.

CONCLUSION

Combating the challenges of the rising unemployment level in the sub-Saharan African economies is a major task for policy makers and economic managers alike. The consequences of a growing unemployment phenomenon are such damning that no economy can afford to despise. Such implications are glaring in the economy of Nigeria where many negative developments are traceable to the non-availability of jobs for the teaming population of energetic youths. Therefore, the need to aptly address this ugly development becomes paramount. While the government takes the leading role in the task of employment generation by providing the necessary enabling environment for economic activities, it is necessary to note that the battle against unemployment in Nigeria, like a war that is too important to be left for the generals alone, cannot be left for the sole effort of the government. All stakeholders must therefore work together to get over the hurdles of unemployment.

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