

THE IMPACT OF YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT ON SOCIO- ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN BENUE STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examined the phenomenon of youth unemployment, its prevalence and form, causes and effects on socio economic development in Benue State. Cross sectional study design was used while youths and adults constituted population of the study. Data were collected using questionnaire and key informant interviews. Structural and frictional youth unemployment was dominant among the people. The findings show that, the causes of youth unemployment in the study area include inability of government to effectively implement youth empowerment programmes, corruption by government officials and overpopulation. Others include improper socialization, decaying moral values, rapid urbanization, ignorance, lack of entrepreneurship skills, lack of industrialization, outdated school curriculum, untimely business policies and poor economic growth in the country. The effects of youth unemployment on socio economic development were found to include consistent violence, armed robbery, insecurity, political thuggery, prostitution, militancy, vandalism. Others include proliferation of arms, drug abuse, political instability, stress, frustration, depression, hostility, abduction, murder and election rigging which have collectively adversely affected socio economic development in Benue State. It recommended for technical, vocational and entrepreneurship education and effective economic policies to tackle the problem of youth unemployment in the area.

Keywords: Youth Unemployment, Socio- Economic development, Benue State

Introduction

One of the greatest challenges facing the Nigeria economy is unemployment which has maintained a rising trend over the years. The total labour force in Nigeria is made up of all persons aged 15-64 years excluding students, home keepers, retired persons and stay-at-home to work or not interested (Danjo & Ali, 2014). Unemployed refers to people who are willing and are capable of working but are unable to find suitable paid employment. Unemployment occurs when people are without jobs and they have actively sought for job within the past four weeks (Njoku & Okezie 2011). Fajana (2000) refers to it as 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. Unemployment is one of the developmental problems that face every developing economy in the 21st century, and Nigeria is not exempted. Its impact is felt more by the youths, leading to youth unemployment. According to Uddin and Uddin (2013), youth unemployment, therefore, could be described as the conglomerate of youths with diverse background, willing and able to work, but cannot find any; or cannot find the type of job that they are trained to do, and which they will be proud to do as their area of expertise.

In Nigeria, the problem of chronic youth unemployment is very evident in Nigeria. Every year thousands of graduates are turn out for whom there are no jobs. Nigerian streets are littered with youth hawkers and bike riders who ordinarily would have found gained employment in some enterprises; or would have demonstrated their skills and resourcefulness if there are enabling environments and reliable

management structures on ground (Uddin & Uddin 2013). Instead, the youths have now shifted their attention to Cybercrime popularly known as '419'. According to Salami (2011) this is the wrong use of technological innovation, which ordinarily should have been channeled towards technological advancement as witnessed in U.S., Canada, United Kingdom and China- the emerging world's production and economic power. The large number of youths who are unemployment is capable of undermining democratic practice as they constitute a serious threat if engaged by the political class for clandestine activities (Dike 2009)

A high level of un- and underemployment is one of the critical socio-economic problems facing Nigeria. While the labour force grows, with an increasing proportion of youth, employment growth is inadequate to absorb labour market entrants. As a result, youth are especially affected by unemployment. The inadequate employment situation of youth has a number of socio-economic, political and moral consequences. A study by Uddin and Uddin (2013) on causes, effects and solutions to youth unemployment problems in Nigeria stressed the adverse effects of youth unemployment on socio economic development. The effects were identified to include inequality of income, boko haram, decline in quality of life and job insecurity. They called for creating enabling socioeconomic and political environment including the provision of infrastructure to make industrial climate investment friendly. This will encourage investors to invest and there by create jobs in order to absorb the unemployed youths.

Similarly, in a study of the implications of unemployment on Nigeria's sustainable development, Danjos and Ali (2014) identified the nexus between youth unemployment and socio economic development. Based on secondary data, the article revealed that unemployment in Nigeria is partly responsible for the rising increase of poverty, disruption of oil production through pipeline vandalization, emergence of deadly groups such as Boko Haram, Niger Delta Boys, Ombatse, armed robbers, kidnappers and waste of human and material resources that have caused setback in the sustainable development of Nigeria. They recommended that government has to play a prominent role if unemployment is to be reduced to the barest minimum by intensifying efforts to create more vocational skills acquisition centres, effective government collaboration with the private sector to create more jobs by putting in place a conducive atmosphere for investments, absolute and robust agricultural reforms to attract the unemployed to farming among other measures. These among other measures it is believed will put Nigeria on the right track to sustainable development.

For Eneji, Dimis and Song (2013) the growing rate of graduate unemployment puts a big question mark on the economy and the education system. For them, youth unemployment causes premature death resulting from criminality, incapacitation, stroke, hypertension, malnutrition, diabetes, vehicular accidents and all the tragedies associated with poverty. Facing the pressure to earn income and survival, the unemployed engages in risky and sometimes immoral jobs. Most of the best brains leave the country to Europe, North America, and East Asia for these reasons. After completing their postgraduate studies in these continents, they remain there on paid jobs. Unemployment in Nigeria has caused wide rural-urban migration, worsening the disparities between the two regions. The population of idlers in Lagos, Abuja, Kano, Calabar, Port Harcourt etc is alarming. The unemployed migrate to these cities with the hope of getting jobs; since the economic and social structures in their various hometowns are poor, 5-6 years later; they still do not find decent jobs. Nigeria exports far more skilled labor and trained intelligentsia than it attracts which is not healthy for self-reliance and socio-economic development. They suggested that the economy should be massively diversified towards labor-intensive industries to realize more employment. Full employment will impact high productivity, increase national competitiveness in terms of penetration of world markets, since it indicates optimal capacity utilization of human and material resources. Such a situation will reduce unemployment, increase income, improve the standard of living, and socio-economic development.

A study by Asaju, Arome and Anyio (2016) on the rising rate of unemployment in Nigeria: the socio economic and political implications revealed that youth unemployment widespread poverty, youth restiveness, high rate of social vices and criminal activities are prevalent because of joblessness, and if not controlled, apathy, cynicism and revolution might become the consequent.

Ahmed (2018) in his study on the socio economic effects of youth unemployment: the case of Yola South Local Government Area, Adamawa State found that, youth unemployment has adverse effects on Nigeria's socio economic development and therefore reduces the standard of living. This is because it leads the youth to drug abuse, criminal activities and increased rate of poverty. Thev author called for manpower

skills development programmes, industrialization and increased sensitization among youths to checkmate the dangers of youth unemployment.

In lagos State, a study by Sulaimon,Rahim, Akintunde and Ajiroba (2015) on socio economic effects of unemployment on Nigeria's, economy: a study of Bariga Local Government Area, lagos State revealed a significant fit between unemployment and socio economic developemt of Nigeria. Majority of the respondents believed that unemployment affects the socio economic status of the unemployed which leads to criminality, dishonesty and other negative social vices. They called for urgent intervention by government at all levels to curb the menace.

The consequences of unemployment in Nigeria are very severe and threatening to the citizenry and the economy as a whole (Bello 2003). The unemployment episode has continued to pose many challenges to the survival of the Nigerian nation. Some of these consequences bother directly or indirectly on the unemployed youth. In terms of scope, Okafor (2011) observed that unemployment is a global trend, but occurs mostly in developing countries of the world, with attendant social, economic, political, and psychological consequences. Thus, massive youth unemployment in any country is an indication of far more complex problems. This study therefore examined the impact of youth unemployment on socio economic development in Benue State, Nigeria.

Method

This section presents the detailed methodology used in this study using the following sections;

Study Design

The study was cross-sectional and descriptive in design, employing both quantitative and qualitative research methods.

Study Setting

Benue State is one of the thirty-six (36) states in Nigeria. It has a projected population of 5,741,800 as of 2016 (NPC 2016). There are 23 local government areas in Benue State namely Ado, Katsina-Ala, Oju, Agatu, Konshisha, Okpokwu, Apa, Kwande, Oturkpo, Buruku, Logo, Tarka, Gboko, Makurdi, Ukum, Guma, Obi, Ushongo, Gwer-West, Ogbadibo, Vandeikya, Gwer, Ohimini. However, the dominant dwellers in Benue State are the Tiv, Idoma, Igede, Etulo, Abakpa,jukun, Nyifon, Akweya . The Tiv are the major dominant ethnic group, they occupied about 14 local government areas with the Etulo and Jukun, however, Idoma, Igede Akweya , Nyifon occupy the remaining nine local government areas, while other migrants like the Igbo Hausa , Yoruba and some other minor other tribes in Nigeria leave among them.

Additionally, Benue State possesses rich and diverse cultural heritages, which are commonly seen on the peoples colourful cultural clothing, displayed masquerades, supplicated music and on traditional dances. Beautiful dances from Benue State have won the State acclaim at national and international cultural festivals. Some of these popular dances include Ange, Ingyough, Anchanakupa, Swange and Ogiriny and others. Benue State is one of the biggest states in Nigeria, it is also seen as richest in the country in terms of food; it is blessed with a lot of food produce, hence the State is refer to as the food Basket of the Nation, since it is known for its large food production throughout the year. The people of Benue are engaged in different occupations, hence the Tiv grows grains like beni-seeds (sesame), and soy beans in the drier lands of the Benue Valley (east of Makurdi), while they cultivate rice on the more swampy area of the state. Other crops such as yam, palm fruit, maize, banana, orange, mango, cassava, cashew, groundnut, etc. are also grown in this part of the State. People who leave very close to the riverine areas engage in fishing as their primary occupation. However, within the southern part of the state is the large thick forest which grows useful trees for timber for both the State and for the country use, the thick forest provides a suitable habitat for rare animals' types and species.

Conflicts being an inevitable phenomenon in human existence occasionally erupted between the Tiv and their neighbours in the course of their settlement and expansion in the Benue Valley in pre-colonial period. Additionally, there have been conflict in Guma, Gwer-West, Katsina-Ala, Kwande, Logo and Makurdi LGAs of Benue State were displaced by marauding Hausa-Fulani Muslim herdsmen.

Study Population

Though, Benue State has an estimated more than 3 million youth population (NPC, 2016), due to time factor and other resources, only four hundred and twelve (412) respondents were randomly selected from the twenty three (23) LGAs to represent the population using Taro Yamanes' sample size determination formula.. Study participants were males and females from 18 years and above.

Sampling Procedure

The study employed clustered and simple random sampling techniques to select its respondents. Thus, the study adopted the existing three political senatorial Districts as its clusters out of which six LGAs (Katsina Ala and Vandeikya in Zone A, Gboko and Makurdi in Zone B, Otukpo and Oju in Zone C) were adopted for the study. Simple random technique was then employed to drawn 412 respondents (comprising males and females youth) across the local government areas to represent the entire population

Data Collection and analysis

Semi – structured questionnaires (SSQs) and key semi - structured interviews (SSIs) were used to elicit data from the respondents. The gathered data was then analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively. Specifically, data on socio-demographic attributes of respondents were analysed quantitatively using statistics such as percentages and frequency distribution tables. Apart from the above, all other information elicited from the respondents were analysed qualitatively. Descriptive and inferential statistical measures were used to analyze and generate data into frequency tables. Analysis of qualitative data was done using thematic narratives and direct quotation of responses.

Results

Socio-Demographic Variables of Respondents

This section presents the data collected on some the socio-demographic variables of respondents. The data shows that 169 (41.94%) of the respondents were between 15- 20 years, 178 (44.17) aged from 21-30 years. The educational attainment of respondent as revealed that, 106(27.18%) had no formal education, 142(36.41%) attained primary education. Also 92(23.59%) attained secondary education while 50 (12.82%) attained secondary education while 50(1.82%) attained tertiary education the marital status also shows that, 86(22.05%) were single and 304(77.95%) were married. Data on religion of respondents indicated that, 285(73.08%) were Christians, 1(3.33%) were Muslims, 84(21.54%) were traditionalist while 8(2.05) were in other religions. Occupation status also shows that, 95(4.36%) were farmers, 66(16.92%) were civil servants. Those in business were 88(22.56%), students formed 78(20%) while 63(16.16%) were applicants/unemployed. The monthly income of respondents shows that, 157(40.26%) had less than N5000 per month. About 141(36.15%) of the respondents had monthly income from N6,00-N 15,00 while 92(23.59%) earned between N16,00 and above. These finding are presented in table 1

Table 1: Socio-demographic variables of respondents

Variable	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Age		
15-20	169	41.94
21-30	178	44.17
31 and above	56	13.90
Educational Attainment		
No formal education	106	27.18
Primary education	142	36.41
Secondary education	92	23.59
Tertiary education	50	12.82
Marital status		
Single	86	22.05
Married	304	77.95
Religion		
Christianity	285	73.08
Islam	13	3.33
Traditional	84	21.54
Other	8	2.05
Occupational status		
Farming	95	24.36
Civil service	66	16.92
Business	88	2.5
Studying	78	20
Applicant /Unemployed	63	16.16
Monthly income		
Less than N5000	157	40.26
N6,000 N 15,000	141	36.15
N16,000 and above	92	23.59

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Prevalence and forms of Youth Unemployment

This section examined the prevalence of youth unemployment in Benue State. From the findings, 178 (44.17) stated that, youth unemployment is increasing, declining accounted for 127 (31.51) while 98 (24.32) opted for stable. The data is summarized in table 2 below

Table 2: The prevalence of youth unemployment

Category	Variable	Percentage
Increasing	178	44.17
Declining	127	31.51
Stable	98	24.32
Total	403	100

Source: Field Survey 2022

It can be inferred that, youth unemployment is increasing in the study area. This was confirmed by a 40 year old man in Ogbadibo who asserted that:

The problem of youth unemployment has become so rampant in recent times. Most of the youths have no gainful employment. Few are self employed while majority of them roam around this environment with higher certificates. Many years ago, the situation was different from what is obtainable now. Unfortunately, our government seems to be less concerned about the problem.

Data was also collected on the form of youth unemployment more prevalent in Benue State. It was found that, majority 158 (39.21) state that frictional unemployment was more common in the study area, 135 (33.50) said it was seasonal and cyclical unemployment. For 60 (14.89) of the respondents, it was technological and residual unemployment while 50 (12.41) concluded that, it was structural unemployment. The data is summarized in table 3 below:

Table 3: Forms of Youth Unemployment

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Structural Unemployment	50	12.41
Frictional Unemployment	158	39.21
Seasonal/ Cyclical Unemployment	135	33.50
Technological/Residual Unemployment	60	14.89
Total	403	100

Source: Field Survey 2022

The findings show that, structural unemployment was more common in the study area.

Causes of Youth Unemployment

The causes of youth unemployment in Benue State were examined. The data is summarized in table 4 below.

Table 4: Causes of Youth Unemployment

S/N	Factors	Frequency	Percentage
1	The inability of government to effectively implement youth empowerment programmes	33	8.19
2	Corruption by government officials	56	13.90
3	Overpopulation	21	5.21
4	Improper socialization	25	6.20
5	Peer pressure	36	8.93
6	Decaying moral values	42	10.42
7	Rapid urbanization	28	6.95
8	Ignorance	19	4.71
9	Lack of entrepreneurship skills	49	12.16
10	Lack of industrialization	44	10.92
11	Outdated school curriculum	15	3.72
12	Untimely business policies	12	2.98
13	Poor economic growth in the country	23	5.71
	Total	403	100

Source: Field Survey 2022

The effects of Youth Unemployment on Socio Economic Development

This section assessed the effects of youth unemployment on socio economic development in Benue State. The data is presented in table 4 below:

Table 4: The Effects of Youth Unemployment on Socio Economic Development

S/N	Social Effects	Frequency	Percentage
1	Violence	28	6.95
2	Armed Robbery,	12	2.98
3	Election Rigging.	17	4.22
4	Murder	19	4.71
5	Abduction	16	3.97
6	Hostility	23	5.71
7	Depression	25	6.20
8	Frustration	30	7.44
9	Stress	21	5.21
10	Political Instability	27	6.70
11	Drug Abuse	23	5.71
12	Proliferation Of Arms	19	4.71
13	Vandalism	26	6.45
14	Insecurity	36	8.93
15	Political Thuggery	24	5.96
16	Prostitution	14	3.47
17	Militancy	18	4.47
18	High dependency rate	15	3.72
	Poverty		
	Total	403	100

Source: Field Survey 2021

Discussion of Findings

The causes of youth unemployment identified include inability of government to effectively implement youth empowerment programmes, corruption by government officials, overpopulation. Others include improper socialization, decaying moral values, rapid urbanization, ignorance, lack of entrepreneurship skills, lack of industrialization, outdated school curriculum, untimely business policies and poor economic growth in the country.

As noted by a key informant:

One major factor is that of population growth. Nigeria has continued to experience high rate of population growth. This increasing population growth has produced an overwhelming increase in the youth population thereby resulting in an increase in the size of the working age population. Related to the rapid population growth is the massive rural-urban migration by the youth.

This finding collaborate with Saanu, G. (2013) the high degree of geographical mobility of youth in Africa is in form of rural to urban which has been influencing youth unemployment. In Nigeria, youth migrate to the cities more than other migrants and in the cities, job opportunities are very limited. Thus, the rate of urbanization of the youth has continued to create unemployment. Lack of employable skills due to inappropriate school curricula is another factor contributing to the rising youth unemployment. Analysts have argued that in Nigeria generally, the skills that job seekers posses do not match the needs and demands of employers. According to them, the education system in Nigeria has its liberal bias which indeed over supplies the labour market with graduates who do not possess the skills required by employers. Many graduates in Nigeria lack entrepreneurial skills to facilitate self-employment (Oladele, Akeke & Oladunjoye, 2011).

Another key informant notes:

One of the causes of youth unemployment is the perception of policy makers and the youth themselves about employment. To the policy makers and the youth, employment means a job with salary and working for someone else. It is this perception that has continued to influence the institutions in Nigeria that provide skills and training. Based on this, curricula and training programmes are generally tailored towards preparing young people for formal sector jobs. Since these jobs do not exist, there is often a mismatch between the skills possessed by the job seekers and the available jobs.

In the words of another key informant:

Various factors such as rapid growth of population resulting to outstripping supply of jobs in the market, rapid growth of labour force arising from rural–urban migration in terms of push/pull factors, lack of employable skills, cultural barriers, lack of awareness, lack of vibrant manufacturing sector (industries, factories) and massive corruption are the causes of youth unemployment in Nigeria.

This finding agrees with that of Alanana (2003), Awogbenle and Iwuamadi (2010), Ayinde (2008) who equally observed that, the major causes of youth unemployment were among others as rural urban-migration, rapid growth of population, lack of employable skills, lack of vibrant industrial sector and massive corruption were among the causes affecting unemployment of youth

The social and economic effects were found to include violence, armed robbery, insecurity, political thuggery, prostitution, militancy, vandalism. Others include proliferation of arms, drug abuse, political instability, stress, frustration, depression, hostility, abduction, murder, election rigging. The findings from key informant interview confirmed these findings as noted by a male key informant:

Youth are made to become willing tools in the hand of politicians, to use them for anti-social and dirty political activities and as a tool to perpetuate ethno-religious clashes in the study area, which can equally cause great social upheavals in the country. Also unemployed youth are utilized as local militants to attack, destroy properties and lives which affect the socio-economic status of the study area in questioned and Nigeria at large. Again youth are used in various anti-social vices such as arson, assault, abduction, stealing, armed robbery, terrorism, sex offences and so on and therefore, this and others has the potential to destabilize and truncate the democratic and development process in the study area and Nigeria at large and the need to adjust.

The findings highlight some of the implications of unemployment on socio economic growth. This is because unemployment has left much to be desired as far as sustainable development in Nigeria is concerned. One of the obvious implications of unemployment in Benue State is that poverty has become an order of the day in Nigeria because of the high level of unemployment among the youth. Poverty is a serious problem that has a lot of implications for lives of individual's families and nations. Most of the unemployed youth cannot meet the basic needs of their lives that cannot guarantee Nigeria's sustainable development.

A key informant observed that:

Many Nigerians cannot meet the basic needs of life because they have no jobs. Graduates are being churned out yearly in various institutions with dimmed prospect of getting jobs. The few jobs available are not based on merit or competence, rather on favoritism.

The implication of unemployment on Nigeria's sustainable development therefore cannot be overemphasized because unemployed people cannot afford their basic things of livelihood. Unemployment is a waste of human resource in view of the national resources put in training the unemployed. These resources could have been used in other areas of development particularly the provision of infrastructure.

Another key informant observed that,

The returns to the various types of investment in human resources are unnecessarily minimized by unemployment'. Absence of social security in Nigeria also deprives the unemployed a share in the national income that makes the life of the unemployed miserable. Utilization of labour after investing a lot of resources on training is a colossal lost to the country. Unemployment is a condition

where the available labour force is not used or utilized for the country to derive the benefit in national development. Therefore, in Nigeria as a whole, “the productive capacity of a significant portion of the labour force is unutilized.

In the words of another key informant:

It is imperative to note that the essence of manpower training is to be able to make effective use of it so as to add value to the development of the country. Anything less than this is absolutely a waste of resources. This has led to the emergence of “area boys” or political thugs in so many parts of the country who are used as agents of harassment and intimidation of political opponents in places it is pertinent to state that the emergence of these “area boys” cannot be unconnected with the high level of unemployment being experienced in the country. The unemployed are ready to be employed for any kind of assignment as long as they are paid for it, because the unemployed also have needs which need to be met.

This attitude is detrimental to the survival of the country because it is one of the major social problems affecting the growth and development of this country in terms of sustainable development which of course we are yearning for. No young man who has acquired Western education without a job would remain himself without engaging in one thing or the other for him to survive. What he does matters a lot to the development of the country positively or negatively.

As noted by a key informant:

Emergence of insurgency groups such as Boko Haram, Niger Delta boys, Cults, militia and thuggery to mention but a few. These deadly organizations came into existence as a result of unemployment the country is going through. These terrorist groups have not only destroyed properties but also lives in places where they are operating such as Benue.

There is no doubt that this negative attitude has directly affected the socio-economic development of the country. It is unfortunate that man has become a wolf to his fellow human being which has direct bearing on Nigeria’s sustainable development. People that are contributing to the development of the country are killed like ants. Government has also deployed a lot of funds to take care of the various attacks that should have been used in other areas for development.

Conclusion/Recommendation

In conclusion, Youth unemployment is considered to be a menace in Nigeria, which constitutes a bottle neck to the democratic and developmental process of our contemporary Nigerian society and particularly Benue State. This is because; the youths in question could be manipulated to undermine the stability of Nigeria’s democracy at any point in time. Against this background, there is the need by government at all levels, international community and other stakeholders to embark on massive job creation to take these youths off the streets. Hence, Nigerian leaders should strive to promote good governance in order to engender youth empowerment, employment and socio-economic development.

Unemployment is a serious problem in Nigeria and it is unfortunate that the country is being threatened by unemployment whose impact on Nigeria’s sustainable development cannot be overemphasized. The social vices that have characterized the nation such as armed robbery, trafficking, kidnapping, terrorism, prostitution among others cannot be unconnected with unemployment crisis, the rate at which is alarming today. Until adequate measures are taking, the future of Nigeria’s development will be a mirage. These problems are tied to poverty caused by unemployment that is inimical to sustainable development. Thus, skills acquisition centres should be established across the state to enable the youths acquire entrepreneurship capabilities. Most importantly, efforts should be made to make agriculture more lucrative to make youths to venture into it. Education at all levels should conform to best standards to adequately development the minds of learners to be creative and thus become employers of labour. Ensuring effective industrialization to accommodate youth across levels of learning will help to tackle youth unemployment in Benue State.

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