

## Implications of Unemployment on Nigeria's Sustainable Development

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### Abstract

The thrust of this article is to examine the implications of unemployment on Nigeria's sustainable development. The justification for the study is because of the consequences of unemployment on the socio-economic development of the country. 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. It is against this background the article 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.

**Key Words:** Unemployment, Implication, Sustainable Development, Skills Acquisition and Entrepreneurship.

### Introduction

Nigeria is a country that is endowed with enormous resources, both human and material. These resources are scattered across the six geo-political zones which are: North-West; North-East; North-Central; South-West, South-East and South-South. Presently, Nigeria is 53 years old, but the citizens are struggling to survive due to economic hardships or difficulties. It is believed by many that Nigeria as a country in the West African sub-region is blessed with huge resources. However, it is the least in terms of comfortable standard of living. This cannot be unconnected with the level of unemployment the Youth of Nigeria are faced with. Unemployment has assumed a high proportion and it is also seen as one of the causes of poverty in the country. This monster has been on the increase or is getting worse on daily basis as the numbers of graduates are increasing annually.

Premium Times Mobile (2013) noted that, "the rate of unemployment among Nigerians (started to get) worse when President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan assumed office" in 2010. According to the report, unemployment rate in Nigeria as of 2010 was 21.1%. This figure, within the shortest time possible increased to 23.9% in 2011 even with the government poverty alleviation programmes such as National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), National Directorate of Employment (NDE) and Subsidy Re-Investment and Employment Programme (SURE-P) to mention but a few.



The rate of unemployment is alarming and scaring, because of the disastrous consequences that accompany it. The rise in the level of unemployment is an indication that the measures adopted by President Goodluck Jonathan are not yielding the desired objectives. For instance, according to the National Commission Population report (2012), there were 51.18 million Nigerians unemployed in the economy in 2011. This is a large population that could constitute a threat to the Nigeria's economy, and thus requires adequate government attention.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Nigeria is the largest Black African country in the world. The country is equally rich in human and material resources. Unfortunately, it has the largest population of people that are unemployed in the world. Unemployment in Nigeria after 53 years of political independence is said to be the highest, this has made life difficult especially among the youth with enormous consequences. This fact has been acknowledged by President Goodluck Jonathan when he said "The population of our young people is high. If we are unable to provide jobs for these young people, the country could face serious problems" (Daily Trust, 2013:10). This clearly shows how disastrous unemployment is in a country because it has been on the increase since 2006. According to National Bureau of statistics as quoted by Olaiya, (2013:28), "unemployment rates were 12.3% in 2006, 12.7% in 2007, 14.9% in 2008, 19.7% in 2009, 21.1% in 2010 and 23.9 in 2011".

There is no doubt some of the social problems we are having in Nigeria today cannot be unconnected with the high level of unemployment. Such problems are conflict, kidnappings, armed robbery, prostitution, drug addiction, and drunkenness to mention but a few. These problems have negative impact on the sustainable development of Nigeria directly or indirectly. Conflicts have resulted to destruction of lives and public properties. This has been worsened by the rapid population growth of Nigeria of 3.2% annually as observed by National Bureau of statistics. These problems have made Nigeria to be unsafe for investment.

### **Objectives and Methodology of the Study**

The major objectives of this study are to assess the impact of unemployment on the sustainable development of Nigeria. Other specific objectives are, to:

- i. discuss the types of unemployment in Nigeria.
- ii. find out the causes of unemployment in Nigeria.
- iii. examine the implications of unemployment to Nigeria's sustainable development.

To achieve the above mentioned objectives, the data for this study were collected from the secondary sources, viz; text books, journals, newspapers and internet. Therefore, content analysis was used as method for the data analysis. These sources were able to reveal all the information needed to conduct the study such as the types of unemployment, causes of unemployment, and implications that greatly helped to draw conclusions and make recommendations.

## Exploration of the Concepts

### i. Unemployment

Unemployment is a concept that has been subjected to many definitions depending on how the various authors tend to view it. According to Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary of Current English (1980:941) unemployment refers to “state of being unemployed; Amount of unused labour”. That is, unemployment refers to labour that is not engaged or that is not put into use for productive purpose. Unemployment is also defined as “the percentage of the labour force that is without job” (Index Mundi, 2013). Unemployment in other words, is the total percentage of people who want to work but the work is not available. It refers to the number of people who have acquired the required knowledge and skills and are willing to work but the work is not available for them to do. These people are products of many institutions within and outside Nigeria. In the view of Olaiya (2013:23), any population of joblessness people can be said to be unemployment which has rendered many young men and women redundant.

Beveridge (1931) one of the earliest authors in the subject matter quoted in Ojo (1998:216) defined unemployment as “the idleness of the man who depends on employment for a livelihood and cannot get the type of employment for which he is suited when he wants the kind of employment and he is fit for it. Thus, unemployment is a condition where a man has the ability to work for him to earn a living, but the job is not available for him. Such people may be those who have completed primary, secondary or tertiary education who are roaming on the streets searching for what to do for a living.

### ii. Sustainable Development

According to United Nations (1987) cited in Amos (2010:6), sustainable development is, “a pattern of resource use that aims at addressing human needs while preserving the environment so that these needs can be met not only in the present but also for generation to come”. Hence, sustainable development is a kind of development that takes care of the basic needs of the present generation without compromising the interest of the next generation whether economic, political or social. Similarly, World Commission on Environment (1987) cited in Oyeshola (2008:161) defined sustainable development as, “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generation to meet their own needs”. Indeed, the two definitions are similar in the sense that man’s basic needs are virtually the same and revolve around economic, social, political and environmental needs. These needs are very crucial in the survival of mankind not only in the present generation but also the next generation. These needs entail food, housing, clothing, health, education industrial and agricultural development, preservation and protection of the environment to enable people to live a comfortable life. Quality living is the essence of life which we struggle for on daily basis.

## Types of Unemployment

There are many types or categorization of unemployment in Nigeria. For instance, Ojo (1998:224-227) in his book “Human Resource Management: Theory and Practice” discussed five types of unemployment that have cut across many countries in the world particularly the developing countries as follows:



**Structural Unemployment:** This is the type of unemployment whereby the qualifications of a person is not adequate to meet responsibilities of his job or assignment. Structural unemployment comes as a result of certain factors such as: the technological displacement, lack of proper skills in the composition of demand, residency in depressed areas, changes in the structure of wages in relation to the pattern of demand and competition of imports with domestic goods among others. The contribution of these factors to structural unemployment cannot be overemphasized. For instance, the introduction of technology such as computers has displaced many people in many organizations, especially banks and this has resulted in structural unemployment.

**Frictional Unemployment:** Ojo, (1998:225) also discussed frictional unemployment as the continuous flow of people from one job to another (in and out of employment). It is a situation where a person is out of one job and in search of another job. The time the person is staying without job is frictional unemployment which may be long or short. The major cause of frictional unemployment is normal labour turnover. For instance, new graduates spend some period or time searching for the right job that leads to frictional unemployment. Changing employment is not particularly easy especially where the level of unemployment is high such as Nigeria where the labour market is saturated.

**Cyclical Unemployment:** This is the type of unemployment that is caused by changes in business conditions or during recessions and depressions. In other word, cyclical unemployment occurs due to disequilibrium that leads to insufficient aggregate demand to purchase full-employment output in a country. It is against this background that cyclical unemployment is called, "demand deficient" unemployment. During recession and depression many employees usually lose their jobs.

**Seasonal Unemployment:** This kind of unemployment is based on the dictate of the season. Seasonal unemployment comes and goes with the seasons of the year that dictates the demand of certain jobs. Seasonal unemployment usually concentrates in a particular season of the year which cease at another season. For example, the demand for agricultural labour increases during the rainy season- planting, cultivation and harvesting. In addition, road construction is always out of place in the rainy season, albeit it depends on the terrain of the areas. Therefore, some workers are relieved of their work during the prevailing season.

**Residual Unemployment:** This type of unemployment occurs to people who are physically or mentally disabled that makes them to have low level of productivity, if at all any opportunity is open to them. Most people with certain mental and physical disability experience residual unemployment because of their very low standard of efficiency or performance. This includes blind, deaf and physically impaired people.

### **Causes of Unemployment in Nigeria**

Unemployment in Nigeria cannot be unconnected with the following factors:

- Inability of government and the private sector to create jobs for the people coupled with the zeal of all educated people or graduates interest in white collar jobs (Terzungwe, 2013:41). Attempts made by the government to introduce programmes meant to reduce poverty and create employment opportunities have not yielded the desired result. Programmes such as National Directorate of Employment (NDE) and National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP). These programmes have not generated adequate employment opportunities. A report observed that unemployment among Nigerians became worse at the time President Goodluck Jonathan assumed office. Indeed, the report showed that unemployment rate in Nigeria in 2010 was 21.1 percent, a figure that increased to 23.9 percent in 2011 (National Planning Commission (2013). Dr. Christopher Kolade the Chairman of Subsidy Re-investment and Employment Programme (SURE-P) noted that the rising rate of unemployment in the country is no fewer than 40 million Nigerians without jobs (National Bureau of Statistics, 2013).
- Rapid population growth: It is obvious that rapid population growth has played a significant role in the increase of unemployment level in Nigeria. Nwokwu, (2013), observed that Nigerian population based on 2006 census was 140,431,790 with annual growth rate of 3.2 percent. With this growth rate, the population could be over 180m in the year 2020. This to a larger extent has affected the increase of the labour force directly. It is against this background that Nigeria is said to be the most populous country in Africa. The rapid increase in population is not commensurate with the increase of job opportunities. The population of the country is annually on the increase that if nothing tangible is not done, could be disastrous. Currently, Nigeria's population is estimated at 167 million. With this rate of population growth, more than 150,000 bachelor degree and Higher National Diploma graduates are produced annually with no jobs for them to do (Isaiah, 2013).
- Terzungwe, (2013:41) also noted that lack of government encouragement for vocational and technical education as well as entrepreneurial development have contributed to unemployment in Nigeria.
- Vocational, technical and entrepreneur education are powerful tools that could empower the youth to be self-employed. Unfortunately, the vocational and technical schools we have in different parts of the country are not well equipped to instill students with the required skills. This cut across secondary and tertiary institutions. It is based on this our graduates are said to be unemployable because they lack vocational and entrepreneurial education that can make them self-reliance.
- Rapidly growing urban labour force as a result of rural-urban migration. Rural-Urban migration arises due to the need for white collar jobs, lack of social amenities in the rural areas and the high level of underemployment due to seasonal employment (Nwokwu, 2013). The inability of the government to provide infrastructural facilities in the rural areas such as good roads, electricity and recreational centres have forced youths to migrate to the urban areas. This has made farming to be the occupation of the elderly which of course is detrimental to food production in the country. This has been



worsened by lack of access to agricultural facilities for them to engage in meaningful farming.

- There is also the rapid explosion of educational institutions that directly increases the supply of manpower in the labour market. In the 1960s there were only three Universities in Nigeria located in the three regions namely Ahmadu Bello University in Zaria, University of Ibadan, Ibadan and Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Nsukka. As at today, there are over 97 Universities made up of Federal, state and private scattered in different parts of Nigeria, aside secondary schools, Colleges of Education, Polytechnics and monotechnics. The funny aspect of most of these educational institutions particularly Universities is that they are producing unskilled graduates that are unemployable. It is against this back Olaiya, (2013:30) noted that “out of 4,000,000 youth that graduated from secondary and tertiary institutions annually, less than 20% can find white collar jobs”. Only few of these graduates have skills that could enable them to be on their own or to be employable.
- The collapse of ‘used to be viable’ manufacturing or industrial sector has equally contributed to the high level of unemployment Nigeria is currently going through. Many industries in Kano, Kaduna and other cities in the country are nowhere to be found which rendered many people unemployed particularly the textile industries in Kano and Kaduna. It has been observed that, “there are over 800 collapsed industries in Nigeria and over 37 factories have closed shops in 2009 especially in Kano and Kaduna (Nwokwu, 2013). It has to be noted that these collapsed industries are scattered across the country. It is unfortunate that a country blessed with fertile land suitable for cotton cultivation has allowed her textile industries to collapse. These were textiles in Kaduna and Kano that had thousands of employees.
- Neglect of agricultural activities such as farming has equally contributed to no small measure to Nigeria’s unemployment. Farming in the 1960s and early 1970s was the major occupation that many Nigerians were engaged in particularly the youth. But with discovery of oil in the early 1970’s farming was relegated to the background. Agriculture in Nigeria has not been given the recognition it deserves if it is to make significant contribution to sustainable development of Nigeria in terms of jobs creation and providing food in abundance to Nigerians. It is on this note, Senator Victor Egba observed that, “Agriculture has a lot of potentials that cannot only transform the national economy but also tremendously impact the personal lives of the farmers, including the youth (Daily Trust, 2013:30). Hence, poor agricultural policies meant to encourage youth to engage in farming have seriously contributed to the decay of agriculture in Nigeria that has made youth not to have encouragement to take farming as a reliable occupation.
- Corruption that has cut across all the levels or strata of government is not left behind in creating unemployment in Nigeria. This is obvious in the diversion of funds meant to generate employment opportunities, injustice to farmers among others. It is imperative to note that corruption to a larger extent deters investment because of the fact that it is



disincentive to potential investors, aside distorting public expenditure and increase of overheads for running government business. Some of these monies diverted through corruption are not kept in Nigeria but in foreign banks abroad. Thus, it is not invested within to generate employment opportunities. According to ILO (2009) in Dalhatu, (2012:94) Nigeria has lost almost a trillion naira to corruption in the last decade alone and this is money that could have been used to provide infrastructure and generate employment opportunities. Infact, a lot of oil revenue have been diverted into the personal pockets of top government officials. For instance, the N500 billion missing in the account of Sure-P meant to improve the living standard of Nigerians including creation of jobs for the unemployed (SURE-P Chairman in AIT news 8.00pm 24<sup>th</sup> Nov. 2013).

### **Implications of Unemployment on Nigeria's Sustainable Development**

It is pertinent at this juncture to highlight some of the implications of unemployment on Nigeria's sustainable development. 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 Nigeria is poverty that is fundamental to Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). 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. Saanu (2013) 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. For example in the course of the disruption of oil production because of pipeline vandalism and associated crimes by Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND-2012) fighting for resource control, Nigeria lost \$15.8 billion revenue that would have added impetus to Nigeria's sustainable development. Production could not continue because the pipelines were vandalized or destroyed aside the number of people that died while struggling to siphon oil from broken pipes. (Dalhatu, 2012:89).

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. No wonder, Ojo (1998:232) 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" (Ubochi, 2013). 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.

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 like Lagos, Gombe, Aba, Warri, Onitsha, Rivers to mention, but a few. 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 (Saanu, 2013). 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.

Emergence of insurgency groups such as Boko Haram, Niger Delta boys, Ombatse Cults 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 Borno, Yobe, Adamawa, Kano, Kaduna, Nasarawa, Rivers, Bayelsa, Delta, and Edo among others. Vanguard Newspaper (2013) noted that, “violence linked to Boko Haram insurgency has left some 3,600 people dead, including killings by the Security Forces”. Niger Delta boys have also vandalized many oil pipelines resulting to the loss of \$15.8 billion, aside from the people killed and kidnapped for ransom (Dalhatu, 2012:89). Ombatse Cult has also committed similarly killings particularly the security men killed in Nasarawa state that was described as barbaric or man inhumanity to men, aside the civilians killed. There is no doubt that this negative attitude has directly affected the socio-economic development of the country. It is unfortunate a 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 and Recommendations**

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. It is against this background that the following recommendations are put forward as measures for curbing the challenges of unemployment in Nigeria.

- Government should intensify efforts to create more vocational skills acquisition centres across the country to enable our young men and women to acquire skills for them to be self-employed and also employ others. Skills acquisition is a strong instrument for empowerment of youth in areas like tailoring, carpentry, automobile mechanic, ICT, metal work, to mention but a few.
- Government should collaborate with the private sector to create more jobs through investment and re-investment. There are many companies or industries that have been shut for more than 20 years and no meaningful attempts are made by the government to revamp them. For instance, the textile industries in Kaduna, Kano and other parts of the country have remained shut to date.
- Government should put more efforts in the area of agriculture to generate employment opportunities because it has a lot of potentials and if proper investment is made, can go a long way to transform the economy, aside transforming the people engage in it. Thus, all the required support for the unemployed to engage in agricultural business should be made available to them like credit facilities, form inputs at subsidized prices and accessible land for cultivations. New farming technology should be used to attract youth into farming because the old methods are not encouraging.
- Government should give more emphasis to entrepreneurial and vocational education that is meant to expose our young men and women to self-reliance. Therefore, the review of curricula in our educational institutions is imperative, so as to be in line with the present demand to empower our youth with skills and make them more employable in the labour market or to be self-reliance.
- Government should diversify the economy in a manner that is not oil based. The four refineries should also be revitalized to perform in full capacity so as to generate more employment opportunities. Other areas such as solid minerals and agriculture are potential areas that need to be explored not only to generate employment but also to contribute to sustainable development of Nigeria.
- Government should give a lot of emphasis to the study of science and technical education by making adequate funding and granting of robust scholarship. Science and technology is the key for any meaningful development and can guarantee self-employment. Therefore, the study of science and technology should be encouraged in its entire ramification.
- Government should give more priority to the provision of infrastructure in the rural areas such as good roads, electricity, water, schools and small scale industries. This will go along way to make the youth to reside in the rural areas and resort to farming. This is because; experience has shown that absence of social infrastructure encourages rural-urban drift.

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