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# YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT AND ITS CONSEQUENCES IN CALABAR METROPOLIS: NEED FOR GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION

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## ABSTRACT

In this paper, consequences of youth unemployment in Nigeria were examined using Calabar metropolis in Cross River State as a case study. The literature is full of scholarly research on the social phenomenon of youth unemployment around the globe. This phenomenon has continued in Nigeria in the face of unfulfilled political promises of job creation by successive governments. This present study has become necessary given the increasing number of youths that migrate into the cities on a daily basis in search of non-existent jobs and the consequent increasing rate of insecurity to lives and property which major cities in Nigeria have been experiencing in recent time. With the help of structured questionnaire randomly administered on some residents of Calabar Metropolis, the study observed that many social problems in the nature of crime, prostitution, hunger, poverty and general structural inadequacies are mainly the consequences of unemployment among the youths. Based on the findings, the paper concludes that youth unemployment does no good to any society. The authors recommend among other things the introduction of safety nets in the form of unemployment welfare benefits to unemployed youths; create decent jobs, as well as free mandatory entrepreneurial education for self reliance in all tertiary institutions in order to avert the consequences of youth unemployment in the country.

## INTRODUCTION

The rate of youth unemployment in Nigeria has been high, even during the period of the oil boom of the 1970s, 1980s and the 1990s. This despicable situation has been worsened by bad governance and corruption among political leadership in Nigeria since her independence in 1960. No political leadership has fully honoured its promises of job creation. The situation in Nigeria was worsened by the huge presence of the military in the political sphere. Commenting on this scenario, DAWN (2005:21) observes thus:

The Nigerian economy since independence became badly battered for about 30 years of military dictatorship which also represented the period of institutionalized corruption in the system. This led to the total collapse of most of the country's social infrastructure and of the productive sector, resulting in unemployment, high crime rate, social exclusion, underemployment, general deepening poverty and high debt burden.

Youth unemployment in Nigeria therefore, is not a recent phenomenon. What is new, however, is the increasing phenomenon of youth restiveness, cultism, armed robbery and prostitution which are consequences of unemployment and other like vices (Nwagbara, 2007)

Unemployment was not in fact a problem in traditional African society per se. In traditional African society, 75 per cent of the population engaged in agriculture while the remaining 25 per cent engaged in petty trading, blacksmithing, gold smithing, moulding, crafts etc, to earn a living. Unemployment as a problem is a feature of the colonial and post-colonial African economy characterized by the massive exodus from agriculture to white and blue – collar jobs created by the colonial situation (Jose, 1979).

During the Third Development Plan period (1975-1980) in Nigeria, the education sector was allocated 3.2 billion naira of the public sector planned expenditure of 26.5 billion naira.

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The result of the massive investment in education was the flooding of the labour market with a large number of school leavers at the time when the labour absorptive capacity of the economy was significantly reduced. The Nigeria government, therefore, had to face the unemployment issue as both social and an economic problem requiring an urgent and well-designed action plan to combat it. This ugly trend has continued unabated over the years.

The alarming rate of youth unemployment has prompted the adoption of various measures and strategies such as Poverty Alleviation Programme, National Directorate of Employment (NDE), Industrial Training Fund (ITF), Directorate of Foods, Roads and Rural Infrastructure etc. by several past military and civilian regimes.

While this paper is an attempt at contributing to the existing scholarly literature on youth unemployment, its main thrust is to draw attention to the problem and consequences of youth unemployment. The essence is to sensitize the political leadership in Nigeria on the urgent need to deliver democratic dividend to the people job creation and overall good governance.

#### Literature review

The escalating rate of youth unemployment has attracted the attention of many social workers, criminologists, sociologists, economists, psychologists and the public at large (Cohen, 1955; Merton, 1968; Jose, 1979; Tarde, 1980; Sutherland, 1960; Kazah, 2005; Waters, 2010). In the view of Waters (2010), the unemployment situation among the youth in the United States of America is alarmingly high. The situation in Africa has been reported as more disgusting.

The Centre for Development and Enterprise's (CDE) 2008 survey of job creation programmes in the three largest metropolitan cities in South Africa - Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town - shows staggering rates of youth unemployment in spite of responses by both government and business. The survey shows that in 2005, four million young people between the ages of 15 and 24 were part of the South African labour force and were available for employment, but 65 per cent or 2.6 million of those youths were unemployed. Furthermore, the findings of the survey show that youth unemployment in South Africa is "extensive, dangerously entrenched and among the highest in the world" (CDE, 2008). According to the report, "this reality carries with it the threats to

social stability - including high levels of crime - associated with endemic unemployment". As a result of these figures, unemployment has been, and continues to be, South Africa's primary policy challenge (CDE, 2008).

Hyman (1977) cited in Jose (1979) conducted a research work on the crisis situation of unemployment among the youths of Singapore and identified crime as one of the effects of economic crisis. His observation shows that over 70% of those engaged in crimes like armed robbery, theft, burglary etc were victims of economic hardship. From Hyman's investigation, 67% of the criminals in the society he studied are unemployed youths. He therefore concluded that crime rate is likely to increase in times of serious economic crisis.

Cohen (1955) observed that people in the lower strata, the unemployed and lower working class, suffer from status frustration and poverty. As a result, they reject the main stream culture, they replace this with alternative sets of norms and values from which they achieve success and gain prestige. The ultimate result is a formation of delinquent sub-culture. Thus, high value is placed on activities such as armed robbery, vandalism, theft, prostitution etc. which are not in conformity with the accepted norms of the wider society.

According to Tarde (1980), criminal activities and deviant behaviour are learned through imitation and suggestions just like other processes of learning. In a similar view, Sutherland (1960) observed that criminal activities are learned through differential associations. From his extensive studies of deviance in society, Sutherland (1960) noted that criminal activities are learned negatively through contact. Based on the above findings, he then concluded that the learning process involves the techniques of committing the crime, the attitude toward committing the crime, and the drive to carry it.

Adverse social condition such as period of high unemployment rate, overpopulation, urbanization, conflict and ethical breakdown can consequently lead to increase in crime rate and delinquent activities (Thomas, 1961). The picture painted by Thomas (1961) depicts the social condition of contemporary Nigerian society. It is a wonder then that many unemployed Nigerians engage in different kinds of crimes due to adverse social condition and the present economic situation of the country that predisposes them toward deviant alternatives.

Similarly, at the UN Assembly in September 2009, the President of Tanzania, Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete, made a graphic presentation on youth unemployment situation in Africa. StockMarketsReview.com (2011) reports his submission thus:

Youth unemployment has consequences that extend beyond the economy. We have seen how some youths with no job prospects and little hope of getting any have become the petrol to raging fires of conflict. They easily fall prey to war lords, criminal gangs and political manipulators to the detriment of peace and stability in their countries. In Africa, youth account for 37 per cent of the working-age population, but are also 60 per cent of the continent's unemployed. In some countries in Africa, which has the fastest-growing and most youthful population in the world, the unemployment rate of young people has even reached 80 per cent. But the expansion of the labour market has not kept pace with the rate of entry of young Africans into the job market.

Also, lamenting on the youth unemployment situation in Nigeria, Ari (2011) observes thus:

Youth's unemployment has been the bane of Nigeria's instability over the years. The phenomenon has become a serious threat to the Federal, State and local governments alike. In Nigeria, we are witnessing mass and long term unemployment. Statistics from directorate of National Youths Service corps shows that 600,000 youths graduate from Nigerian Universities annually. The story is the same with regards to secondary school leavers in the country, where sizeable numbers of school leavers hardly proceed to tertiary institutions due to inability to pay school fees or lack of willingness to proceed with their studies. The overpopulated government work force in the country and the dearth of private sector employment opportunities and dormant nature of our industries further compounded the situation.

On the other hand, Rist (1980) in his study of the effect of economic crisis on the unemployed youths in Liverpool, identified frustration and distress as the major psychological effect of economic crisis. He observed from the study that the rate of frustration and distress are more during economic crisis and adverse social conditions. He also contended that in extreme cases, frustration and distress could lead to mental problem or force one to commit suicide.

Also, George (1984) in his study of the effect of economic crisis on Ghana, identified hunger, malnutrition and poverty as the outward manifestation of the economic crisis. He based his finding from the data of Kwashiorkor patient in Accra Hospital in Ghana. From comparative studies made within the period of five years, he noticed that the cases of Kwashiorkor are increasing. He attributed this increase to hunger and malnutrition caused by rising unemployment in the country.

Clement (1977) conducted a research on the rising effect of unemployment among the youths. His research was conducted in Liverpool and identified prostitution as one of the consequences of unemployment on young girls. He used questionnaires and oral interview to investigate the causes of prostitution among young girls. His findings indicated that over 68% of the girls who indulged in prostitution was as a result of economic hardship. He also observed that 61% of these prostitutes are unemployed. He therefore, warned that prostitution is likely to increase during economic crisis.

To worsen the unemployment situation in Nigeria, tertiary institutions in Nigeria annually turn out many graduates into the over-saturated labour market with little or no employment opportunity to offer them. Some of them are actually 'unemployable graduates' who possess sub-standard paper qualification and no skills. Hence, material hardship, physiological and psychological damage due to unemployment are likely to increase rapidly (Naill O'Haggin, 1997).

In the absence of any meaningful job to sustain them, some of them settle for the many obnoxious trades such as child trafficking, prostitution etc, to make ends meet (Kazah, 2005). Most youths idle away due to high rate of unemployment in the country. Many graduates roam the street on daily basis looking for jobs in a society that is never ready to make use of them (Ogbasonu, 2005). Some of them are hired for thuggery assassins by those in power for political reasons. Other end up as armed robbers, posing threat of insecurity to the society and ultimately putting their already bleak future to incomprehensible jeopardy (Ogbasonu, 2005). Having assessed the unemployment situation in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, Okaba (2005:141) succinctly described the unemployed youths in the Niger Delta thus:

Unemployed youths in the Niger Delta are easily associated with all communal and internal ethnic clash, oil



pipelines vandalism, closure of oil wells, illegal oil bunkering, kidnapping of oil workers and other atrocious acts of sabotage and criminality.

From the forgoing review of relevant literature, it is evident that many social problems in the nature of crime, prostitution, hunger, poverty are the consequences of unemployment. Thus, unemployment is inimical to the progress and stability of any society.

The theoretical perspectives of Durkheim and Merton, on structural anomie and, goal and means, respectively, further explain the views of scholars already reviewed in this paper. According to Durkheim cited in Ritzer (1996), as population increases in size, it exerts pressure on individuals to compete for its scarce resources. Consequently, normlessness will set in and people will resort to deviant means to make ends meet. While Durkheim's theory has lent some credence to the issue addresses in this paper, it has been criticized for being unable to deal effectively with the process of social change (Abrahamson, 1978, Cohen, 1968; Mill 1959; Turner and Maryanski; 1979), cited in Ritzer (1996).

On his own part, Merton (1968) saw deviant adoption, including mental illness as a response to inspiration by inadequate means to achieve them. The aspirations of individual members of the society to attain set goals through societal means often meet with some structural bottlenecks. What this means is that aspiration of individual, if not adequately met may lead to frustration and deviant behaviours. Merton's theory has been criticized as being too deterministic because it fails to explain why some people who experience the effects of anomie do not become criminals or deviants (Haralambos, Holborn and Heald, 2000). Essentially, interplay of the goal and means theory of Merton and Durkheim's anomie theory respectively, give a clue to our understanding of the problem of youth unemployment in Nigeria and the consequent criminal activities of the youth.

#### Study area

Calabar the capital of Cross River State geographically lies on latitude 4<sup>0</sup>58' North and longitude 8<sup>0</sup>17' East. The city lies on a peninsula between Calabar River and Great Kwa River, 35 miles up the Calabar River, on the nearest buildable land to the sea.

According to the 2006 population census figures published in Federal Republic of Nigeria

official Gazette (2009), Calabar had a total population of 375,190, made of 187,676 males and 187,520 females. There is an influx of immigrants to Calabar because of the economic and social potentials of the area. For instance, there is the presence of the premier Export Processing Zone (EPZ), Tinapa Business Resort and a host of others. However, most of them are either non-functioning or are gradually dying as a result of lack of managerial efficiency and absence of political will by the present state government to nurture and sustain them. Economic activities are not vibrant as should be and some ventures seem to have gone to 'sleep' with the political leadership.

Yet, there exists the syndrome of rural-urban drift without a commensurate employment opportunities for these immigrants. This naturally leads to a rise in unemployment because existing vacancies cannot contain the number of applicants willing and able to work. To worsen the situation, none of these job-seekers has any additional skill to be self-reliant. It therefore follows that because of shattered dreams and expectations of the job seekers, deviant behavior is on the increase. Many of these young Nigerians resort to deviant means to make ends meet. This gives rise to armed robbery, theft, burglary, prostitution, youth restiveness and stealing.

#### Methodology

This was a survey study and the questionnaire was the major instrument of data collection. The paper used structured questionnaire with some open-ended and close ended questions. The close ended questions were carefully crafted to elicit information amenable to easy collation and test of hypotheses. The open ended questions which were few were put in place to enable respondents express themselves freely on the social problem of youth unemployment and increasing crime rate in Nigeria. The essence is to help enrich the description and narration of the phenomenon under investigation, limiting respondent to only close ended questions may hinder information which otherwise would be obtained from an open ended questions.

The hypotheses of study are as follows:

- There is no significant relationship between unemployment and youth restiveness.
- There is no significant relationship between unemployment and youth involvement in prostitution.

- There is no significant relationship between unemployment and increasing criminal activities of the youth.

Respondents were drawn from Calabar metropolis. Calabar metropolis was divided into six clusters consisting of respondents with no Formal Education, Primary Education, Secondary Education, NCE/OND, University Graduate and

others. From each cluster, respondents were purposively selected and were administered with questionnaires revolving on issues on consequences of youths unemployment. Empirical and theoretical studies on consequences of youth unemployment were reviewed. Library research was a great resource of secondary source.

**Findings:**

Data Presentation and discussion of findings:

The findings from the field were presented and discussed below.

**Table 1:** Shows Chi-square ( $X^2$ ) statistical analysis of the relationship between unemployment and youth restiveness.

Variables	Responses		Total	X <sup>2</sup> -Value
	Yes	No		
Unemployment	20 (28.75)	49 (40.25)	69	10.74
Youth restiveness	30 (21.25)	21 (29.75)	51	
Total	50	70	120	

Source: Fieldwork, 2009.

\*Figures in bracket represented the expected values.

Significance at 0.05 level,  $X^2 = 3.84$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $X^2 = \frac{(O - E)^2}{E}$

**Result:**

Level of significance = 0.05  
 Degree of freedom = 1  
 Critical values = 3.84  
 Calculated value = 10.74

From table 1, given a degree of freedom of 1 and level of significance of 0.05, the calculated  $X^2$  value 10.74 was found to be statistically greater than the critical value, we accept the alternate hypothesis which states that there is a significant relationship between unemployment and youth restiveness and reject the null hypothesis.

In a nutshell, the responses on table 1 shows that there is a significant relationship between unemployment and youth restiveness. This finding which is supported by the work of Nwagbara (2007) implies that the incessant phenomenon of youth restiveness is a consequence of high rate of unemployment among them.

**Table 2:** Shows Chi-square ( $X^2$ ) statistical analysis of the relationship between unemployment and youth involvement in prostitution.

Variables	Responses		Total	X <sup>2</sup> -Value
	Yes	No		
Unemployment	28 (36.25)	41 (32.78)	69	9.25
Youth involvement in prostitution	35 (26.78)	16 (24.23)	51	
Total	63	57	120	

Source: Fieldwork,

\*Figures in bracket represented the expected values.

Significance at 0.05 level,  $X^2 = 3.84$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $X^2 = \frac{(O - E)^2}{E}$

**Result:**

Level of significance = 0.05  
 Degree of freedom = 1  
 Critical values = 3.84  
 Calculated value = 9.25

Respondents' responses in table 2 shows that unemployment has to a large extent led to the involvement of the youths in prostitution. The computed value of  $X^2$  of 9.25 in table 2, given a degree of freedom of 1 and level of significance of 0.05, was found to be statistically greater than

the critical value of 3.84. Based on this, we accept the alternate hypothesis, and reject the null hypothesis, that which states that there is no significant relationship between unemployment and youth involvement in prostitution.

**Table 3:** Shows Chi-square ( $X^2$ ) statistical analysis of the relationship between unemployment and increasing criminal activities of the youth.

Variables	Responses		Total	$X^2$ -Value
	Yes	No		
Unemployment	52 (40.25)	17 (28.75)	69	19.37
Increasing criminal activities of the youth	18 (29.75)	33 (21.25)	51	
Total	70	50	120	

\*Figures in bracket represented the expected values.

Significance at 0.05 level,  $X^2 = 3.84$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $X^2 = \frac{(O - E)^2}{E}$

**Result:**

Level of significance = 0.05  
 Degree of freedom = 1  
 Critical values = 3.84  
 Calculated value = 19.25

Respondents' responses as presented in table 3 shows that there is a relationship between unemployment and the increasing criminal activities of youths in the study area. The Chi-square calculation further shows that this relationship is significant. From table 3, given a degree of freedom of 1 and level of significance of 0.05, the calculated  $X^2$  value 19.37 was found to be statistically greater than the critical value, therefore we accept the alternate hypothesis and reject the null hypothesis, meaning that there is a significant relationship and increasing criminal activities of the youth.

**DISCUSSION**

From the study, the result in Table 1 shows that there is a significant relationship between unemployment and youth restiveness. This view is supported by Cohen (1955) who contends that people in the lower strata, the unemployed and lower working class suffer from status frustration and poverty. As a result they reject the main stream culture, they replace this

with alternative set of norms and values from which they achieve success and gain prestige.

The result in Table 2 rejected the null hypothesis and accepted the alternate hypothesis. The result shows that there is a significant relationship between unemployment and youth involvement in prostitution. Therefore, the result is supported by Clement (1977) who conducted a research on the rising effect of unemployment among the youths. His research was conducted in Liverpool and he identified prostitution as one of the consequences of unemployment on young girls. His findings indicated that over 68 per cent of the girls who indulged in prostitution was as a result of economic hardship. He also observed that 61 per cent of these prostitutes are unemployed.

The result in Table 3 rejected the null hypothesis and accepted the alternate hypothesis. The result shows there is significant relationship between unemployment and increasing criminal activities of the youth. The result of the study is consistent with the study of

Hyman (1977) cited in Jose (1979) who undertook a research on the crisis situation of unemployment among the youths of Singapore and identified crime as one of the effects of economic crisis. His observation shows that 70 per cent of those engaged in crimes like armed robbery, theft, burglary etc. were victims of economic hardship. From Hyman studies, it is indicated that 67 per cent of those who engage in criminal activities are unemployed youths.

The last hypothesis is also in line with Kazah (2005) who maintain that in the absence of any meaningful job to sustain the unemployed youths some of them often settle for many obnoxious trades such as child trafficking, prostitution etc, just to make ends meet.

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Youth unemployment is on the increase in Nigeria and it has enormous consequences that can hardly be quantified and over-emphasized. Youth unemployment, if allowed unchecked, will bring bad omen to the country. Therefore, government and all stakeholders should check this trend and confront it squarely at an early stage before it degenerates into an uncontrollable situation. Successive governments in Nigeria have not been able to create jobs for the teeming graduates and school leavers that flood the labour market due to corruption and general bad governance. Thus, unemployment, poverty, and crime continue to hold sway as many projects that would have generated decent jobs for the youths are abandoned by politicians who selfishly allocate to themselves the funds meant for the masses.

From the foregoing, this study concludes with the following recommendations of policy alternatives.

- (a) The agencies responsible for job creation should be made functional through adequate funding from the government.
- (b) Government should create jobs in order to avert the consequences of youth unemployment.
- (c) Employment agencies should endeavour to employ qualified youth not based on years of work experiences only. This will give unemployed youths access to employment.
- (d) Government should introduce the payment of unemployment benefit to unemployed youths. Through the payment of unemployment benefit, consequences of youth unemployment will be reduced or averted.

- (e) There should be public advertisement of vacancies in government and private establishments rather than secret recruitment and deployment of staff due to nepotism (the issue of man-know-man) and corruption (the Nigerian Factor).
- (f) Students should be made to undergo theoretical and practical entrepreneurial education to acquire requisite skills before graduation from tertiary institutions in Nigeria. This will make them self-reliant.
- (g) Good governance that matches international best practices should be the watchword of successive political leaderships in Nigeria.
- (h) Lastly, as the young Africans who make up the majority of the unemployed are growing up and are also invading the big cities, job creation efforts should concentrate on the metropolitan areas where they can build on the dynamism of the urban economy.

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