

## YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT AND POVERTY IN NIGERIA

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**ABSTRACT:** *Unemployment and poverty are both reflective and precipitants of plethora of contemporary societal challenges such as leadership, security, governance, etc. that are inimical to human social – existence (for engendering adequate human capacity building and material utilisation) globally. For instance, the National Bureau of Statistics in Nigeria revealed the alarming rate of youth unemployment which is as much as 50%. Considering the fact that, the current population growth rate is put at 2.8 per annum in Nigeria which accompanies an already national population of over 167 million people. Therefore, the extent to which these challenges possess to the nation is remarkably worrisome in recent times, is the escalating and worrisome rate of youth unemployment which has assumed an alarming crescendo. It is against this backdrop, the paper sees to its justification the need to see to its imperativeness with a view of given cogent attention for their needs. Hence, this paper examines “the intimate connection between unemployment and poverty, and how these two phenomena affect the youth in Nigeria”. In order to fulfill the objectives of this paper, relevant literature were consulted and established database explored for holistic and comparative study, to illustrate the mitigation and enabling factors for the realization of the objectives of youth employment and poverty alleviation if not total eradication in the society – Nigeria. With the aid of content analyses of the materials explored: this paper contend that fundamentally, there is a close nexus between poverty and unemployment with direct bearings on the critical segment of the society, particularly the youth. Also, inspite of the myriad policies and programmes initiated by successive Nigerian government such as National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), Subsidy Re-Investment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P), National Directorate of Employment (NDE), National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) Schemes in Nigeria, as lofty and laudable as they seem, their inability to affect the real target (youth), reflects the lacuna between policy formulation and implementation. The thrust of this paper therefore is its strong proposition to government at all levels to demonstrate a commitment towards responsive governance, with focus on jobs creation and eradication of poverty. In addition, appropriate authorities should endeavor to sensitize the citizens on the need to embrace birth control measures for the purpose of engendering sustainable development.*

**KEYWORDS:** Youth, Unemployment, Poverty, Population and Development

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## INTRODUCTION

Unemployment and poverty are both reflective and precipitants of plethora of contemporary societal challenges such as leadership, security, governance, etc that are inimical to human social-existence (for engendering adequate human capacity building and material utilisation) globally. Therefore, a great vision of Nigerian government is premised on becoming one of the

20 most industrialised economies in the world by the year 2020. Attainment of this aspiration hinges on the extent to which the country is able to create and nurture, a competitive and adaptive human resource base, responsive to the rapidly industrializing and globalizing economy. The paper is mindful of the fact that vision 20:2020 designed by the Nigerian government is five years away. Equally and poignantly is to remind ourselves that the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), (we are already in its target: year 2015).Hence its assessment. In spite of all lofty ideas inherent in these programmes, what is crystal clear is that poverty is still enormously ravaging the land. What becomes more worrisome is considering the teeming population of unemployed graduate youths in the country.

Unemployment or joblessness as defined by the International Labour Organisation (1982) occurs when people are without jobs and they have sought work within the past five weeks. The unemployment rate is a measure of the prevalence of unemployment and it is calculated as a percentage by dividing the number of unemployed individuals by all individuals currently in the labour force. Unemployment in Nigeria is defined as the proportion of labour force that was available for work but did not work in the week preceding the survey period for at least 39 hours. Official figures from Bureau of Statistics puts the figure of unemployed at 19.70 percent, about 30 million, but this figure still did not include about 40 million other Nigerian youths captured in World Bank Statistics in 2010. By implication, it means that if Nigeria's population is 160 million plus, then 50 percent or more of Nigerians are unemployed, Njoku and Okezie (2011) asserted.

On the other hand, poverty which has become contentious, has evolved historically, overtime, and varies among nations in magnitude and in scope. There are as many definitions of the concept as there are scholars, analysts, people and institutions writing on the issue. The eradication of poverty has been declared by the United Nations World Summit of Social Development in 1995 as unfinished business of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Oladeji (2011) asserted. As a background for proper appreciation of the intricate relationship between poverty, unemployment and youth, some conceptual clarification is needful of the definitions and measurement of poverty. An available statistical fact on poverty in Nigeria as cited in Oladeji, (2011) indicates the following, inter-alia:

- i 35% of population lives in extreme poverty
- ii 34% are poor in relative terms
- iii almost 52% live on less than a dollar a day
- iv poverty incidence is highest in North East Zone (63%), followed by North West (62.9%), North Central (62.3%), South-South (51.1%), South West (42%) and South East (34.3%).
- v. about 63% of people living in the rural areas are poor, compared with 42% in urban areas (National Planning Commission (2007): Nigeria Millennium Development Goals 2006 Report).

The foregoing statistical information are not mere imagination or impressions, rather they have been generated by some scientific procedure using some measures of poverty. The multidimensionality of poverty has been stressed and succinctly expressed in the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development in the following manner: "Poverty has a various manifestations, including (as cited in Oladeji, 2011).

- i. lack of income and productive resources sufficient to ensure sustainable livelihoods.

- ii. hunger and malnutrition
- iii. ill health
- iv. limited or lack of access to education and other basic services
- v. increased morbidity and mortality from illness
- vi. homelessness and inadequate housing
- vii. unsafe environments and social discrimination and exclusion
- viii. lack of participation and exclusion
- ix. lack of participation in decision-making and in civil, social and cultural life “(World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen, 1995).

The multidimensional nature of poverty is what has given rise to the plurality of definitions, measurements and its conceptualization. By and large; what seems to be a common stand in academic literature as regard this subject matter is that, there are universally accepted indicators of what constitutes poverty and these indicators categorize poverty into absolute poverty, relative poverty and material poverty. Both the classical and classic submission on this subject matter (poverty) shall be unveiled in the subsequent sub-sections of the paper.

Furthermore, the National Youth Development Policy (2001) asserts that the youth are the foundation of a society; their energies, inventiveness, character and orientation define the pattern of development and security of a nation. The youth are a particular segment of the national population that is sensitive, energetic, active and the most productive phase of life as citizens. The youth are also most volatile and yet the most vulnerable segment of the population in terms of social-economic, emotion and other aspects (Anasi, 2010). These entities called youth has gained a wide currency and has been variously classified into such age brackets as 15-24 years (World Bank and United Nations); 15-29 years (Commonwealth Youth Programmes); while for many countries, the figure varies from 13-18 years, 20-25 years, and 12-20 years (Bello-Kano, 2008).

Moreover, in Nigeria context, the National Youth Development Policy (2001) defines youth as people aged between 18 and 35. And they constitutes “all young males and females aged 18-35 which are citizens of the Federal Republic of Nigeria” (National Youth Policy of Nigeria, 2001:4). The paper is attuned to this position. The youth constitute about 60 percent of the more than 160 million people of Nigeria. The Nigeria’s unemployment rate is projected at over 11 percent compared to the average rate of 9.5 percent in sub-Saharan Africa. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2004), young people aged between 15 and 24 years account for 52.9 percent of unemployed people while those aged between 25 and 44 years accounted for 41.1 percent. Therefore, those in age bracket of 15 and 44 years account for 94 percent of the total unemployed persons in Nigeria (Osibanjo, 2006). Based on series of conceptualization of youth in available literature, the paper aligned with the definition given by National Youth Policy of Nigeria (2001). Therefore, the youth is conceived to mean male and female within the age bracket of 18 - 35 who are citizen of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Also, the term “development” has been variously conceptualized by scholars and writers. The like of (Rodney, 1972; Nnoli, 1981) serves as an inroad to gaining a shared understanding of the term national development. The conceptualization of development according to Rodney and Nnoli (1972 and 1981) respectively can be subsumed as follows:

- human-centered rather than artifacts-centered.
- a dynamic process rather than a static state,

- involves a complex interactive relationship between individual and society and
- predicated essentially on production rather than on consumption.

Viewed from this perspective (national development) could, therefore, be defined as the unending process of qualitative and quantitative transformation in the capacity of a state to organize the process of production and distribution of the material benefits of society in a manner that sustains improvement in the wellbeing of its individual members in order to enhance their capacity to realise their full potentials, in furtherance of the positive transformation and sustenance of their society and humanity at large (Onuoha, 2007). Remarkably, at the just concluded **2015 World Economic Forum in Davos**, Switzerland. Youth unemployment took a center stage. The panel discussion comprising of many global business and public sector leaders who were in Davos, engaged in debate, unanimously agreed that youth unemployment is growing in uncomfortable proportions. Available statistics revealed that, in India as at 2013 recorded a total population of 1.27 billion people with youth (aging between 14 and 30 years) constituting 65% of the population, and an annual growth rate (the fastest of which was recorded between 2001 and 2011, when about 181 million people were added to the population). The current projection has also indicated that by 2025, the country would have overtaken China as the most populous country in the world with an estimated population of 1.44 billion people. The country has one of the highest number of youth in the world out of which 75 million youth are unemployed (even when more than one million people are added to the unemployed labour market on daily basis). Similarly, the National Bureau of Statistics in Nigeria revealed the alarming rate of youth unemployment which is as much as 50%, out of the country's 167 million population.

Considering the enormity of this challenge, Roberts (2007) opines that to realize the potentials of youths as the engine of (poverty alleviation and social-economic) development, governments have a salient role to play in addressing these obstacles and facilitating a successful transition to adulthood through pursuit of programmes and policies that alleviate poverty and expand opportunities for employment. Development and sustainability inclusive. It is in light of this introduction, and the need to proffering solution to the problems of youth unemployment and poverty that the paper is germane.

### **Objective of the Paper**

The only and paramount objective of the paper is to

- i. Scrutinize youth unemployment and poverty in order to engender development in all its ramifications in Nigeria.

## **LITERATURE/THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING**

### **Situation Analysis of Youths, Unemployment and Poverty in Nigeria**

#### **Youth in Nigeria**

Youth-hood can be defined as that phase or period of life in which one passes from childhood to maturity. Maturity on the other hand refers to a situation whereby one becomes fully developed. In Nigeria, the youth usually fall into the 18 – 35 years age bracket, that is, both

genders (male and female) (Abdullahi, 2008) affirmed National Youth Policy conceptualization of youth as defined in Nigeria context.

Generally, youths are the one of the greatest assets that any nation can have and therefore, need to be developed and empowered. They serve as a good measure of the extent to which a country can reproduce as well as sustain itself. The youth have been described as the greatest in any nation, are the greatest investment for a country's development (National Youth Policy of Nigeria, 2001).

Over the years, various regimes came up with programmes for youth empowerment and skill acquisition for self-reliance and sustainable livelihood (Project YES 2003). At this point, it is observe that despite all governmental efforts at youth empowerment, through some of her institutions like the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) and Ministry of Women and Youth Development, the Nigerian Youth still command high position in the statistics of unemployment and poverty. The sub-section will enable us to critically and demographically examine the nature of youth employment and risks of poverty as detailed below.

### Youth Unemployment in Nigeria

Nigeria's population is said to have reached about 167 million people in 2012 (National Bureau of Statistics). The National Population Commission (NPC, 2013) states about half of the population is made of youth, defined as individuals between 18 and 35 years of age. Akande (2014) further stressed that, unfortunately, as the youth population grows so does the unemployment rise. In fact, unemployed youth numbered about 11.1 million in 2012.

There are number of trends in youth unemployment in Nigeria. The tables below indicate the trends over the years.

**Table 1: National Youth Unemployment Figures by Gender.**

Year	Percentage of unemployed Youth that are Female and Male	
	Female	Male
2008	58.50	41.50
2009	57.82	42.18
2010	54.52	45.48
2011	50.85	49.15
2012	55.42	44.58

Source: NISER, 2013

Available statistics, from the table 1 as indicated above show that a majority of unemployed youth are female. Women accounted for more than 50 percent of unemployed youth between 2008 and 2012. Many reasons have been adduced for female gender unemployment. Empirical evidences have revealed that the female gender generally experience poverty more than male gender as a result of unemployment.

Payne (1991:87) and Abdullahi (2004) observe that (female) specific risk of poverty stems from the structuring of (female) economic dependency, within families and marriage and in the sexual division of labour that come together to create a gendered vulnerability to poverty and deprivation.

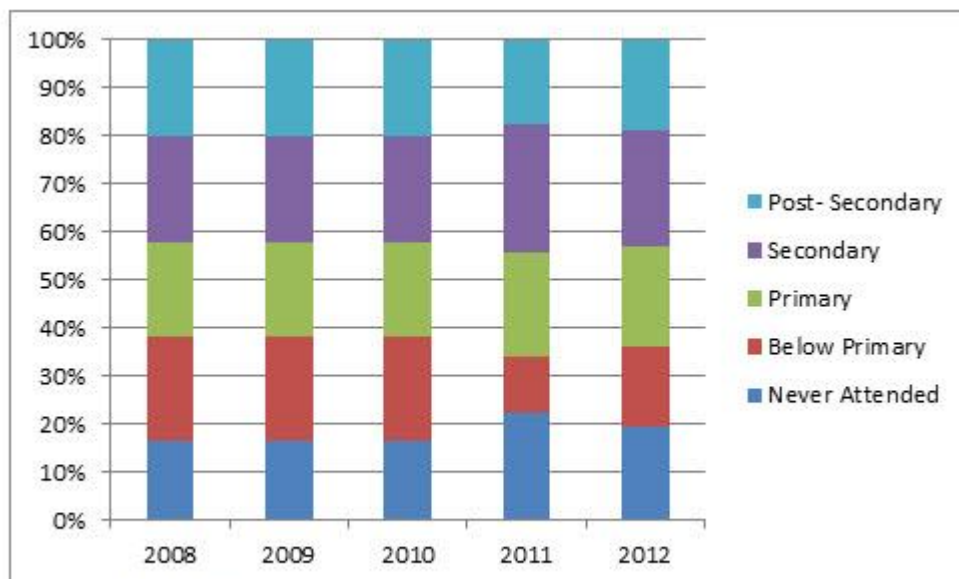
**Table 2: Graduate Unemployment Rate 2003 – 2011 by Residence (Rural/Urban)**

Year	Rural	Urban	Total
2003	8.3	17.3	25.6
2004	12.8	25.2	38
2005	13.3	19.0	32.3
2006	13.4	18.8	32.2
2007	13.4	18.7	32.1
2008	21.7	15.8	27.5
2009	19.8	19.2	39
2010	20.7	22.8	43.5
2011	25.6	17.1	42.7

Sources: *The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2012)*

Table 2 indicates that the problem of youth (graduate) unemployment is critical in both urban and rural Nigeria. The major significance inferences from the table shown above is that, for a period of nine years compared in totality, graduate youth unemployment was high six years in urban as compared to the rural areas. This could be attributed to migration indices – pull and push factors. In addition, considering 42.7 percent as the total population of unemployed youth (graduate) as at 2011 compare with the current population of about 50 percent (unemployed youth) of the total population of Nigeria (167 million) gives credence to the statistics revealed as at 2011 as credible. Simply because, the total population of Nigeria as at 2015 have increased compared to 2011. Therefore, there could be possibilities.



**Table 3: National Youth Unemployment Figures (15 – 34 years) by Education, 2008 – 2012**

Source: NISER, 2013

Relatedly, in terms of education, from 2008 – 2012, over half of unemployed youth did not have an education past primary schools (see figure/table 3). This particular group has consistently accounted for over 50 percent of all unemployed youth. However, graduates of tertiary institutions also seem to be badly hit by unemployment too – making up about 20 percent of youth unemployment as indicated in the table 3 above. And often remaining unemployed for upward five years after graduation (NISER, 2013).

### **Reasons for the Failure of Government Programmes as regard Poverty and Unemployment in Nigeria**

By and large, youth's unemployment in Nigeria is a consequence of several factors. One major factors is that of population growth. There is a high population growth rate – 2.8 per annum, according to the World Bank (2014) which accompanies an already national population of over 167 million people, Akande (2014) asserted. 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. According to the United Nations (UN) Report (1999), 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.

In addition, 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 possess do not match the needs and demands of employers (Mcgrath, 1999; Kent and Mushi, 1995). The trio affirmed that 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 and Oladunjoye, 2011).

Similarly, the perception of policy makers and the youth themselves about employment is another factor. 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 this regard, evidence shows that Nigeria is committed to education reforms. The promulgation of Decree 9 of 1993 created rooms for the establishment of private institutions in the country. Following the deregulation of education in Nigeria, government has encouraged the opening of private schools and universities. As at May, 2012, the total of approved universities in Nigeria was 137, comprising of 37 federal government-owned, 50 states' government- owned and 50 privately-owned universities. The aggressive creation of more private and publicly-funded universities and colleges of technology has inadvertently created an adverse disparity in job creation efforts. This is because Nigeria has not pursued a commensurate job absorption strategy for the many graduates from these educational institutions. Whereas universities have grown geometrically, jobs and employers have grown at arithmetic progression. This gap in Nigeria strategic approach to job creation has led to the supply of skilled graduates being higher than the demand in the economy thus driving down wages and further increasing unemployment.

Related to this, among other factors responsible for youth unemployment are poor governance, ineffective targeting of the poor resulting in resources being thinly spread among competing projects, overlapping of functions, poor coordination and lack of sustainable measures (Musari, 2009). In response to the alarming unemployment situation, Nigerian governments at various times have made several attempts to solve the nagging unemployment problem by setting up various solution agencies. Notable among these agencies are the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) and National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP). However, it is on record that these attempts have not made much significant impact on youth unemployment (Omorodion, 2010).

### **National Youth Policy – Review in Brief**

At the global level, youth are highly recognized. The youth are regarded as the greatest assets that any nation can have. They are seen as the center of reconstruction and development. According to the World Development Report (2007) there are 1.3 billion people in the age bracket (12-24) as the largest group ever. Close to 85 per cents of this over 1.3 billion young men and women live in developing countries, this figure is projected to increase to 89 percent by 2025.

To this end, Nigeria's population is predominantly young. According to NPC (2006) Nigeria has a population of one hundred and forty million people. Accordingly, the NBS (2012) Projected Nigeria population to be over 160 million. One third of this population is conceived to be between ages 10 to 24 years. The recognition of this fact led to the development of the



National Youth Policy and the subsequent reviews of the policy. Fundamentally, the overall policy goal of (NYP) is to provide and appropriate framework that will promote the enjoyment of fundamental human rights and protect the health, social, economic and political well-being of all young men and women in order to enhance their participation in the overall development process and improve their quality of life.

Consequently, in pursuant of the policy goal, the National Youth Policy seeks to approach youth problems from holistic (comprehensive) perspective so as to ensure the coverage of the most critical elements. One of such critical element is what this paper considered to be “Unemployment and Poverty” that the youth is seriously affected.

Available academic literature reveals that successive Nigerian government have played pivotal roles in this regard (solution to unemployment and poverty alleviation). But inspite of the myriad policies and programmes initiated by Nigerian government such as National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), Subsidy Re-Investment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P), National Directorate of Employment (NDE), National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) Schemes, as lofty and laudable as they seem, their inability to affect the real target (youth) tremendously, reflects the lacuna between policy formulation and implementation. The dare consequences is what the paper tagged sociological implications of poverty and unemployment in Nigeria.

### **Sociological Implications of Poverty and Unemployment in Nigeria**

Nigeria as a nation has no doubt seriously underdeveloped the youth population, the consequence of this abject neglect of the Nigerian youths on national security and economic development are best imagined. A trip to all the crannies and corners of the Nigerian cities will reveal the pathetic condition of the youths as a result of systemic disempowerment. To eke out a leaving therefore, the devil finds useful tools in their hands to unleash their frustration on the general society via hawking vandalized and adulterated petroleum products (South-South), Urchins (area boys) syndrome in Lagos, South-West), while rabbles of militants in the Niger Delta, Boko Haram in Maiduguri (North-East) on the part of the male youth, while the female youths result to prostitution (call-girl) activities and other menial duties, a real life statistics which could serve “better than official statistics in unraveling the extent to which Nigeria has underdeveloped and or disempowered her youthful population arising from pervasive unemployment and poverty in Nigeria” (Onuoha, 2008).

### **Theoretical Framework for Understanding Unemployment, Poverty and Development.**

At this juncture, a sociological model is used to shed more light on the nexus of unemployment, poverty and development in Nigeria. One of such sociological model that carefully explain the context of unemployment in Nigeria is the theory of surplus value by Marx and Engels (1848) and McLellan (2009). Marx believed that capitalist societies like Nigeria always had and would have high levels of unemployment. He believed such economies went through cycles- periods of expansion in which there was full employment which were followed by periods of crises during which unemployment rose. Recoveries from crises were only temporary. Marx asserted that capitalist economies worked in a way of favouring the few bourgeoisies, capitalist’s property class at the expense of the large ploleritariat, working non-property class. In Marx’s assertion:

*“It is in the very nature of the capitalist mode of production to overwork some workers while keeping the rest as a reserve army of unemployed paupers”.*  
Marx (1848)

According to Marx, unemployment is inherent within the unstable capitalist system and periodic crises of mass unemployment are to be expected. The function of the proletariat within the capitalist system is to provide a "reserve army of labour" that creates downward pressure on wages. This is accomplished by dividing the proletariat into surplus labour (employees) and under-employment and unemployed as well (McLellan 2009). These reserve army of labour fight among themselves for scarce jobs at lower and lower wages. At first glance, unemployment seems inefficient since unemployed workers do not increase profits. However, unemployment is profitable within the global capitalist system because unemployment lowers wages which are costs from the perspective of the owners. From this perspective low wages benefit the system by reducing economic rents but, it does not benefit workers. Capitalist systems unfairly manipulate the market for labour by perpetuating unemployment which lowers labourers' demands for fair wages. Workers are pitted against one another at the service of increasing profits for owners. In Nigeria context, the Nigerian super-rich politicians together with super-rich capitalists formed a cabal and logically established economic imperialism. Economic and social policies formulated by the government are not in any way of benefit to the common Nigerians.

The concept of “*monkey dey work, baboon dey chop*” (shrewd-capitalism) is well pre-eminent in the country (as cited in Alabi, 2014). Workers are living at the mercy of the rich. These have directly and indirectly continue to widen the gap between the rich and the poor. Young people with skills, certificates and energies have nothing to offer as a result of mass unemployment, but dance to the tune of the politicians who in turn used them to manipulate, rig and destabilized elections. In most cases, after they have been used by their politician, they are dumped or left to face their fate whenever the law catches up with. The few available jobs for the battalion of youth job-seekers are politicized. Unless the job seeker is connected to a political god father he may not get the job. According to Marx, the only way to permanently eliminate unemployment would be to abolish capitalism and the system of forced competition for wages and then shift to a socialist or communist economic system. For contemporary Marxists, the existence of persistent unemployment is proof of the inability of capitalism to ensure full employment.

In a similar vein, for a better theorizing on poverty as a social discourse, Townsend (1970) dug into history of early men and proposed three alternatives. These are: **Subsistence, basic needs and relative deprivation standards**. Therefore, in order to have a better conceptual explication, the paper x-rays these three interlocutory thoughts on poverty. **Absolute poverty** means the inability of a person or group to provide the material needs for physical subsistence and protection of human dignity. These materials are food, clothing, shelter, water, health services, basic education, transportation, and work because the persons or groups do not have jobs or income (UNDP1996). Similarly, the idea of *subsistence* as subscribed by Townsend to mean “families were in poverty when their income were sufficient to obtain minimum necessities for the maintenance of merely physical efficiency” and “family was treated as being in poverty if its income minus rent fell short of the poverty line” (Rowntree, 1901:86). The yardsticks for poverty line were equally stipulated as at that time in question, Townsend stressed.

Rhetorically, in Nigerian context of the ₦18,000.00 minimum wage: does it really meet up the “subsistent” or “absolute” definition of poverty? If one should pay all necessary rents (such as accommodation, transportation) just to mentioned a few, what would remain for food, shelter and clothing? **Absolute Poverty**: is defined in terms of the minimal requirements necessary to afford minimal standards of food, clothing, healthcare and shelter. This proposition on “subsistence” or “absolute” definition of poverty is not left out without criticisms. The paper observed the main criticism from scholars, is that the physical needs such as food, shelter and clothing should rather be social needs. Because human beings are “social beings” rather than physical beings. Townsend (1981), quickly wrote a rejoinder to this criticism, is that different approach in principle has to be adopted, no unilinear measures or approaches to it.

**Relative poverty** on the other hand is the inability of certain sections of the society to satisfy their basic needs as well as other needs. Equally, it has a long historical antecedent. Drewnowski and Scott (1966) expressed that **Basic needs** include two elements. First, they include certain minimum requirement of a family for private consumption: adequate food, shelter and clothing, as well as certain household furniture and equipment. Second, they include essential services provided by and for the community at large, such as safe drinking water, sanitation, public transport and health, education and cultural facilities. Townsend (1970) added that the concept of basic needs should be placed within the “context of a national independence, the dignity of individuals and peoples and their freedom to chart their destiny without hindrance” (ILO, 1976:20 – 25).

This above assertion reminds one, of the music of legendary Late Fela Anikulapo Kuti’s song titled: “*suffering and smiling*”, when he expressed that “99 standing, 56 sitting” in a lousy commuter bus, popularly known as “*Molue*” used mostly in Lagos State in the Late ‘80s and early 2000. The contention of this submission is that, it is supposedly the responsibility of government to provide essential social amenities that are befitting to the citizenry. This consideration should be based on the economy strength of the nation. And of course, with abundant wealth been generated from numerous natural resources, Nigerians have no cause been poor. The problem that is very much likely to arise with this proposition which apparently happens to be its major criticism, is the disproportionate poverty and deprivation as been experiencing by over 320 ethnic groups in Nigeria, considering the geographical terrain of various ethnic groups among their others social needs.

Furthermore, **Material poverty** is seen as the absence of ownership control of physical assets as lands, and all other resources that land produce or that subsists on land as birds and animals and mineral resources (UNDP, 1996). Townsend (1970) contributions to this, is what he tagged “Relative Deprivation”. To him, the implied poverty line or threshold is relative to the contemporaneous conditions or resources in particular national societies; suffices to say, people do experience poverty based on geographical location they might find themselves and this is very “relative”. The social needs and availability of resources to meet those needs are peculiar. Hence, the paper adds “irrespective of geographical division in the federation, and in as much as the citizens are within the ambit or geographical entity of a given country. Consideration and assessment of poverty should be peculiarly assessed”. “Relativity” applies to both resources and to material and social conditions, Townsend (1993) further stated. Relative deprivation or Relative poverty measurement is further defined by reference to the living standards of majority in a given society that separates the poor from the non-poor.

Relating the discourse “Relative deprivation” or material poverty, that is explaining poverty in Nigeria context for further illustrations. Officially, there are fifty seven Local Council Development Areas (LCDAs) in Lagos state. The residents across these LCDAs are not enjoying social amenities equally. Simply because, not as a result of lack of social facilities, but majorly the geographical terrain where these LCDAs are located differ and the natural terrain often serve as impediment to government in engendering better and equitable distributions of social amenities to them. For instance, the coastal areas: Ibeju-Lekki, Eti-Osa, Amuwo-Odofin compare to metropolitan and cosmopolitan areas of LCDAs. Hence, the concept of “inequalities” to access development crippled the inhabitants of coastal areas compared to inhabitants of both metropolitan and cosmopolitan areas. Thereby both would be experiencing “relativity” in terms of poverty. Over many years, the “relativity” of meanings of poverty has come to be recognized, in part if not comprehensively. Adam Smith, for example, recognized the ways in which “necessities” were defined by custom in the early part of the nineteenth century, citing the labourer’s need to wear a shirt as an example. (Smith, 1812).

Having looked at the concept of Poverty from both classical and classic assertions, what seems common to both thoughts is “lack of basic facilities such as food, clothing, shelter, deprivation and means to meet-up with basic necessities of life”. At this juncture, the paper contextually attune with Onuoha (2007) in theorising Poverty to mean a situation of deprivation in which an individual or group of individuals in a society lack the requisite resources, opportunities or means of livelihood to lead a long, healthy, and satisfactory life by being unable to provide for their basic life requirements such as water, food, shelter, clothing, sanitation and a minimum level of medication. Hence, the concept of poverty now occupies center stage in development discourse.

## **METHODOLOGY**

In an attempt to achieve the major objective of the paper and based on the fact that, it is purely on the desk type of research, a theoretical paper. The paper relied heavily on secondary sources of data, thereby inferences were drawn from available relevant literature as related to the dimension of the paper. Therefore, the paper is subsumed into eight sections. Section one unveil the introduction of the paper, section two covers literature review/theoretical underpinning. The third section brings to bare methodology used in the course of the paper. The fourth section focuses on results and findings of the study while the fifth section centers on discussion. The sixth section is based on implication to research and practice. The seventh section draws out conclusion while the eight section ushered future research for the study

## **RESULTS AND FINDINGS**

From the foregoing analysis, it is evident that Nigeria is endowed with youthful population that is critical for unleashing the creative energies that would sustain national development. However, the youth has been on the margin of national development, owing to worsening unemployment and poverty. To jumpstart Nigeria’s sluggish economy, the innate potentials of her youth must be activated, harnessed and utilized. In this wise, the paper suggests the following:

- There is need for increased and sustained investment on human capital development in Nigeria, by way of increased provision and funding of free qualitative education, health care delivery, and public housing.
- The Nigerian government should initiate and partner with the private sector to develop a functional microcredit scheme for the poor, especially the unemployed youths. The microcredit movement has shown clearly that lack of access to capital through restrictive institutional practices is a major obstacle to giving the poor greater capacity to improve their own standard of living (Curtain, 2001:6). Such a microcredit scheme should be robustly organized to enhance transparency and accountability in its management and flexibly structured to avoid unnecessary institutional bottlenecks and measures that prevent youths from accessing such credit facility.
- In an era of globalisation characterized by rapid economic growth without job creation, financial crisis, and market or policy failures, there is the urgent need for the Nigerian state to introduce a robust social security scheme to take care of unemployed youths, enhance livelihood security, and ensure the redistribution of income as well as risks.
- Poverty to a large extent is a function of the absence of shortage of opportunities for earnings, and productive and purposeful jobs are the only sustainable and proper way to alleviate poverty. To this end, it is imperative that the Federal Government provides adequate incentives to private sector enterprises that are labour-intensive which could contribute to more job creation and the alleviation of youth unemployment.

## DISCUSSION

The essence and paramount objectives of governance is to ensure smooth running of administrative apparatuses of the state (Nation). Ensuring adequate provision of needs of the citizenry and security of their lives and properties. Therefore, the underlying discussion of the subject matter of this paper is that government at all levels should partner with international development agencies to establish vocational education and entrepreneurial skill acquisition centres, both in the urban and rural areas. Despite successfully completing higher education, there still many young people who lack basic skills needed to support their post-school life or who are now being regarded as ‘unemployable’. For them to be employable or fit into the job market in Nigeria, they need additional skills. One way of achieving this goal is for the government to create partnerships and networks with privileged individuals, religious groups and private organisations to establish vocational training centres throughout the country to absorb many drop-outs and school leavers idling away in urban and rural areas. This should be accompanied with the comprehensive overhaul of educational curriculum to ensure that vocational training and entrepreneurial skills are incorporated into the programmes of educational institutions to make graduates capable of running cottage industries, for instance. This will promote employment generation for teeming youths and therefore contribute to overall development in Nigeria.

## IMPLICATION TO RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

Dwelling into this subject matter – “youth unemployment and poverty in Nigeria” is a wake-up to the nation clarion call. The challenges are enormous, most especially as it affect one of the critical segments of the nation – “youth”. The escalating and dynamic waves of social milieu



in Nigeria almost on daily basis, wanton destruction of lives and properties are the resultant effects of joblessness among teeming population of youth.

As buttressed in the forgoings of the paper, the six geo-political zone of the country (Nigeria) is engulfed with ranging from escalating rate of kidnapping, crude oil pipe vandalism, communal classes ethnic militia engagement in intra-war over primordial sentiments over share of the “national cake” – political positions and resource control at the centre, just to mentioned a few. Findings of this nature based on explanatory research and many more of its kind is to unravel the remote causes that often leads to societal imbroglio and how the youth are mostly affected. Most often times, they (youth) are used as weapons by few elements (people that control the corridor of power) to ignite crises for their selfish gains. Hence, study of its kind avail casual factors and policy formulations. This becomes practical oriented, thereby engendering peace, development in all its ramifications and nation’s sustainability.

## **CONCLUSION**

The paper indicates that joblessness and poverty are both deep and sudden glut of contemporary societal challenges such as leadership, security, governance etc, that constitute danger and threat to social, economic and political development. From the evidence of various development indicators shown in the paper such as unemployment rates by states, growth profile of poverty, unemployment and other relevant variables, relative and absolute poverty among others and the contribution of two sociological models to the subject matter, that is, “Unemployment, Poverty and Youth in Nigeria”. The view of the paper as regard the interactive effects of the concept – unemployment, poverty and youth in Nigeria is that, there is a close nexus between poverty and unemployment with direct bearings on the critical segments of the society, particularly the youth. Also, inspite of the myriad policies and programmes initiated by successive Nigerian government such as NEEDS, SURE-P, NDE, NYSC Schemes, as lofty and laudable as they seem, their inability to affect the real target (youth), reflects the lacuna between policy formulation and implementation. Moreso, poverty kept soaring high. The thrust of this paper therefore is its strong proposition to government at all levels to demonstrate a commitment towards responsive governance, with focus on jobs creation and eradication of poverty. In addition, appropriate authorities should endeavor to sensitize the citizens on the need to embrace birth control measures for the purpose of engendering sustainable development.

## **ADVANCEMENT FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

Though, the methodology employed for this research study is based on findings from reputable journals, established database and a comparative analyses were carried out with an intensive careful content analysis. The paper posits that more of the findings could still be discovered in the course of further research, exploring findings in a quantitative pattern. The paper is of the strong opinion as its major thrust, that a composition of both qualitative and quantitative – triangulation mechanism of research, possibly could avail more robust analytical justification for the study. Moreso, time factor is considered to be very crucial in this content.



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