

Rising Youth Unemployment and The Socio-Economic Realities in Nigeria: The Akwa Ibom State Experience

Victor E. Ita, PhD

Department of Political Science, Akwa Ibom State University
Obio Akpa Campus, Oruk Anam LGA - Nigeria

John E. Bassey

Department of Political Science and Public Administration
University of Uyo, Uyo, Akwa Ibom State – Nigeria

Citation: Victor E. Ita and John E. Bassey (2022) Rising Youth Unemployment and The Socio-Economic Realities in Nigeria: The Akwa Ibom State Experience, *International Journal of Development and Economic Sustainability*, Vol.10, No.4, pp.1-14

ABSTRACT: *This paper was undertaken to establish the interplay between youth unemployment and resultant negative socio-economic realities in Nigeria as evident in Akwa Ibom State. Nigeria's population and that of Akwa Ibom State is currently (July, 2022) estimated at about 206 and 7 million respectively with a progressive average growth rate of 3.5 percent per annum. Out of this number, while more than 35 percent at the national level, over 52 percent of the youth in Akwa Ibom State are unemployed. This situation, as the paper observed, is occasioned by crucial factors ranging from the poor state of the economy and educational standard, poor attitude to agriculture, poor enabling and secured environment, scarcity of data on informal employment and entrepreneurship, poor economic growth rate and wrong impression about technical and vocational education. Furthermore, the paper noted that the prevailing unemployment among youth in Akwa Ibom State has engendered high rate of social vices such as prostitution, armed robbery, oil bunkering, internet fraud, drug trafficking and addiction, rape, kidnapping, political thuggery, assassination and other acts of criminalities. For the way forward, the paper proffered, among others, that the Akwa Ibom State government should redesigned the education sector to become technology-based in order to enhance skill acquisition for self-employment as well as encourage the youth to embrace agriculture as a profitable business venture. Moreover, honest effort should be made towards revitalizing the moribund and ailing industries in the state.*

KEYWORDS: Youth, unemployment, social vices, entrepreneurship, self-employment, economic growth.

INTRODUCTION

Every society across the globe has its peculiar problems and challenges. Akwa Ibom State is not an exception. As a state in a developing country, she faces her own share of social, political, economic and cultural problems which has in measure affected the well-being of the populace. One of the problems bedevilling the state is youth unemployment which accounts for the rising wave of crimes with serious implications for socio-economic development of the

state. Generally, in Nigeria unemployment has become one of the most serious socio-economic problems, especially during this period of global economic crunch. In Akwa Ibom State, it has been a major problem confronting the lives of the youth leading to poverty, frustration, dejection and dependent on family members and friends who also have their own problems to contend with.

Paradoxically, Nigeria is endowed with abundant deposit of natural resources such as crude oil, mineral resources, agricultural products and human resources, yet, majority of her over 206 million population lack decent means of livelihood or are unemployed and are wallowing in poverty with its attendant social, economic, political and psychological consequences (Ogwuibe and Olorunfemi, 2018). As at 2018 the Nigerian youth population was about 140 million representing 65% of the total population of the country. Of this number, over 120 million youth or over 30 percent were unemployed (National Bureau of Statistics, 2020). Presently, (July 2022), the unemployment rate in Nigeria is estimated at 33 percent from 32.5 percent in 2021. Unemployment rate in Nigeria is expected to be 35.00 percent by the end of 2022 and is projected to trend around 40.00 percent in 2023 and 44.00 percent in 2024 (Sasu, 2022).

In like manner, in 2011 the population of Akwa Ibom State was estimated at 4,625,100 representing 2.824 percent of Nigeria's entire population. Using the population projections and estimate, the population of Akwa Ibom State is estimated at 6,494,967 which rank the state as one of the most populated in the South-South geo-political zone of the country. Unfortunately, in 2020, 45.2 percent of the population were unemployed (NBS, 2020); by (July 2022) it has risen to 52 percent (Igwenagu, 2022). With increasing rate of unemployed youth population in the state, there is the tendency for them to redirect their energies into lawless behaviour, resulting in high rate of crimes and criminality in the state. The accompanying tables provide more insight into Nigeria's population structure:

Table 1: Nigeria's unemployment rate 2016-2022

Related	Last	Previous	Unit	Reference
Youth unemployment rate	33.50	32.50	Percent	June 2022
Unemployment rate	33.30	27.10	Percent	Dec. 2020
Employed persons	46488.00	58527.00	Thousand	Dec. 2020
Youth unemployment rate	53.40	40.80	Percent	Dec. 2020
Employment rate	66.70	72.90	Percent	Dec. 2020
Employment change	187226.00	155444.00	Jobs	Sept. 2016

Source: Sasu (2022).

From the table above, it is apparent that Nigeria is plagued by chronic youth unemployment and likely to continue in ascendancy as thousands of graduates are produced yearly without jobs availability for majority of them. In Akwa Ibom State, streets are littered with youth hawkers who ordinarily would have found gainful employment in some enterprise (Okafor, 2011). In recent years, this situation has become of great concern not only to the government, but also to policymakers and the general public. The high rate of unemployment among Akwa Ibom youth has contributed to the high rate of crime, insecurity and violence in the state.

Moreover, these unemployed youth constitute a threat if engaged by the political class for clandestine (secret acts) and criminal activities which may undermine democratic practice and plunge the state into crisis.

Given the foregoing, it is often assumed that unemployment accounts for most of the social crimes perpetrated by youth in Nigerian society. Hence, if the youth are empowered to engage in useful ventures, the level of societal crimes such as armed robbery, prostitution, oil bunkering, internet fraud, drug trafficking and addiction, rape, kidnapping, political thuggery, assassination and other components of violence and criminalities will be reduced to the barest minimum. Judging from the above backdrop, the paper pertinently posed the following questions:

- (i) What are the predisposing factors to rising youth unemployment in Akwa Ibom State?
- (ii) What efforts has the Akwa Ibom State government made to tackle the rising youth unemployment and the attendant socio-economic situation in the state, and, with what result?
- (iii) What should government do to succeed in its fight against youth unemployment in Akwa Ibom State?

These and other related issues will be addressed in the succeeding parts of this paper. From a historical and descriptive methodological perspective, the paper will consider the opinions of some scholars and analysts with a view to suggesting the way out of youth unemployment and its corresponding undesirable consequences in Akwa Ibom State and by extension the country, at large.

Conceptual Explication

The Youth

According to Ugwu (2009), the term youth is ambiguous, with different meanings in different context. In simple terms, youth denotes a young person between childhood and adult age; the period of human life between childhood and maturity. It is a transition period between adolescent and adulthood. Biologically, youth is the quality of being young, youthfulness and juvenility. It is that aspect of one's existence that succeeds the childhood stage and proceeding to adult age. Apart from the biological perspectives, other allusion to the youth concept borders commonly on agreed aspects as rate of dependency on parents, physical development, behavioural tendencies and age categorizations. However, it must be emphasized that there is no consensus regarding the youth age bracket.

Adegun and Akomolafe (2018) postulated that the youth have both positive and negative attributes which are predominant and distinguishes them from the adults. They are energetic and full of life; they are fearless (sometimes to a fault); they are generally militant, rebellious and have disregard for social norms and ethics. They usually lead campaign against what they perceive as injustice, inequality, discrimination and violation of fundamental human rights (Ejiogu, 2011). Also, Dei-Tumi (2011) asserted that the youth remain the bedrock on which the development of any nation thrives. They are the most exuberant, the sharpest in memory, the most talented, the most innovative and the healthiest in most societies. These qualities have made them the potent resources without which society is lifeless. Despite these positive

attributes, they are arguably the most vulnerable, most deprived, most discriminated against, most marginalized, most exploited particularly by politicians, the most counter-productive and the most endangered species in society, especially in Africa, Nigeria inclusive.

The Nigerian Population Commission (NPC) (2002, p. 18) and the United Nations (2007) has conceived the youth as persons in the age range of 15 to 24 years. The NPC went further to describe the characteristics of the persons identified as youth:

These are persons who normally would have completed secondary education, and would either be in tertiary institutions such as the university, striving to secure employment, or be already employed. This group of persons would need post-secondary education, employment and reproductive health information and services.

Yet, the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2009) in the Second National Youth Policy Document considered persons between the ages of 18 to 35 years, male and female who are citizens of Nigeria as youth. The highpoint is that a person at the age of 18 is considered as an adult with voting rights. In this sense, most people in this bracket are regarded as the Nigerian youth irrespective of their chronological age. Hence, this paper adopts this age categorization of the youth, in view of the fact that this age limit is more commonly accepted across countries.

Unemployment Conceptualized

According to Osakwe (2013), defining unemployment is problematic as the tendency has been to define employment and consider the opposite as the definition of unemployment. The difficulty in defining unemployment is further accentuated when it is placed against its many variables such as 'underemployment', 'low-wage employment' and 'informal employment'. For the author, unemployment exists when a fitting and eligible individual does not have a job or work to do for some compensation. For Alanana (2003), unemployment refers to a situation where people who are willing and capable of working are unable to find suitable paid employment. It is one of the macro-economic problems which every responsible government is expected to monitor and regulate; else, the higher would be the poverty level and associated welfare challenges.

As conceived by the International Labour Organization (1982), unemployment or joblessness occurs when people are without jobs. This includes those unemployed persons who give up job seeking out of frustration and persons retrenched or laid off for various reasons. The expression of these definitions is that persons who are without a paid job to earn a decent living are unemployed. Striking the same chord, Nwangwu (2014) grouped unemployment into two categories, firstly, the older unemployed people who lost their jobs through redundancy or bankruptcy. That is, persons available for employment, whose contract of employment have terminated or have been temporarily suspended and who are without jobs and seeking paid employment. The second category consists of the young school leavers, most of whom have never been employed in their lives, together with persons who had been in retirement, who were available for work during the specified period and were seeking paid employment; persons without a job and currently available for work who have made arrangements to start a new job at a date subsequent to the specified period; and persons temporarily or indefinitely laid off without pay.

Framework of Analysis

The analysis of this paper is situated within the ambit of the frustration-aggression theory developed by John Dollard, Leonard Doob, Neal Miller, Orval Mowrer and Robert Sears in 1939. The major proposition of this theory is that every human being has certain needs which are arranged in order of priority. Some of these needs are fundamental or basic needs that failure to satisfy them could result in frustration, and consequently the frustrated person or group may be forced to aggressively react in a manner that will lead to a crisis or conflict. The argument of Dollard and his associates is that people are motivated to act aggressively by a drive induced by frustration. Put differently, frustration denotes a condition that arises when goal attainment is obstructed, while aggression constitute actions aimed at eliminating perceived stumbling blocks. The implication of the proposition of this theory is that frustration will inevitably lead to some form of aggression.

In praxis, there are certain unacceptable practices such as youth unemployment that have become institutionalized in the society, which serve as source of pain. As long as the very active young people are not provided with opportunity for self-actualization in terms of gainful employment after being educated, the tendency for them to be frustrated and become aggressive, as such unleashing their frustration on the society exists (Ajayi and Nwogwugwu, 2014).

Applied to this paper, the theory aids in explaining youth unemployment and their consequent involvement in political, financial and economic crimes in the country generally and Akwa Ibom State in particular. A country that produces thousands of university graduates yearly without commensurate employment opportunities creates a fertile ground for a feeling of frustration among these unemployed graduates. Naturally, there is a feeling of joy and great expectation when a student graduates from a university or any institution of higher learning. This expectation gradually fades away and is replaced by feeling of frustration after some years of joblessness caused by the inability of the various sectors of the economy, especially the productive sectors to accommodate these new graduates in terms of job opportunities. As frustration prolongs and the feeling of deprivation of what is expected increases, there is a greater probability that the individual or people can resort to illegitimate activities in order to actualize their expectations in the society.

The society already has expectation for individuals and established means of achieving them. When the means are limited, the young people are forced to achieve the goal through illegal means in order to fulfil perceived societal expectations. The rise in political and social crimes (robbery, thuggery, kidnapping, banditry, terrorism, cyber-crime, and the likes) committed by youth is a sign of 'gap' in the society. And it is increasingly becoming difficult to completely eradicate these social misdemeanours across the different geo-political zones in Nigeria.

Moreover, these crimes occurs as a result of joblessness as the majority (about 90%) of the people involved in such activities are youth and majority of them are graduates who are idle. Hence, if government engages this set of youth in lucrative jobs or business, they will be occupied and the feeling for such crimes or agitation will no longer be of interest to them. It is important to state here that when these youth are engaged in various sector of the economy, it will not only be to their-own interests but would as well add value to the socio-economic

development of the country. The overall consequence of these has been the socio-economic backwardness and stunted development in Nigeria and Akwa Ibom State in particular.

Predisposing Factors to Youth Unemployment in Akwa Ibom State

Several factors may be blamed for the prevalence of youth unemployment in Akwa Ibom State is a consequent of multivariate factors.

(i) **The state of the economy and educational standard:** There is no doubt that the state is a civil service economy. Outside the civil service the rest of the economy is dominated by the informal sector (artisans). The ability of this type of economy to absorb the educated youth has been low. Moreover, the illiterate segment of the youth population has not been able to fit into available limited employment vacancies. In Akwa Ibom State in particular and Nigeria in general, there is a gap between the world of learning and the world of work. Most of the courses taught in our schools and universities do not meet the needs of an economy like ours, which yearns for technological knowledge. As observed by Akande (2014), the Nigerian educational institutions have failed to provide their students the appropriate skills to make them employable. Moreover, the deficient infrastructure, teaching facilities and low teacher quality in schools in rural areas, comparable to what obtains in the urban areas, account for the high growth in unemployed youth. In fact, the major jump in youth unemployment between in 2010 and 2021 could be due to the mass failure in national examinations conducted among final-year secondary school students within the period, which have rendered many of them unemployable.

(ii) **Poor attitude to agriculture:** Akwa Ibom State is blessed with vast arable lands that support all year round agriculture, but most youth in the state do not perceive agriculture as a profitable business venture. The agricultural sector had been the leading provider of employment in Nigeria especially for more than 60% of the Nigerian population. This sector has completely been loathed by youth in search of non-existing white-collar jobs. Hence, every advertisement for any vacancy often receives thousands of applications. Added to this is the fact that there are oil multinational companies operating within the state territory, thus, most youth's desire is to work in these companies even when their qualifications is at variance with the requirements for employment in these companies. Furthermore, government negligence of the agricultural sector in preference for the oil sector which does not have the capacity to employ a large number of the youth has led to increase in the unemployment profile of the state especially with the yearly turnover of graduates.

(iii) **Poor enabling and secured economic environment:** The enabling economic environment in Akwa Ibom State and Nigeria in general over the years has been poor and discouraging which in turn poses serious challenges to employment in the state (Ekpo, 2006). This situation coupled with poor security environment has hampered investment drives and the after-effect has been the reduction in the process of employment generation. Many job seekers who made efforts to embark on self-employment were forced to windup unceremoniously as a result of hostile environment occasioned by poor economic enabling environment and insecurity. Lack of critical infrastructures, especially energy infrastructure, also contributes to the problem of unemployment.

(iv) **Lack of vibrant industries to absorb competent graduates:** This obstacle is an offshoot of infrastructural deficit and a debilitating Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) implemented by Nigeria in the 1980s, which led to the closure of many industries and from

which the country is yet to fully recover (Falusi, 2014). In Akwa Ibom State quite a number of industries are still left moribund and useless despite government promises to revamp them. These include: Quality Ceramics in Ikot Ebom, Itu; Plato Crown in Aka Offot, Uyo; Peacock Paints in Ikot Ekan, Etinan; Qua Steel in Eket; Aluminium Smelter Company of Nigeria (ALSCON) in Ikot Abasi; Abestonit in Oron; Sunshine Battery and Biscuit Industries in Ikot Ekpene. These industries not only provided revenues for the state, they generated employment, and oiled the local economies of their host communities as well as brought socio-economic development to the areas. Unfortunately, these industries are now in a state of comatose and are shadows of their former selves even as the state government has continued to give the excuse of not finding viable investors to manage them.

(v) Scarcity of data on informal employment and entrepreneurship: Policymakers in Nigeria and Akwa Ibom State in specific have had to confront inadequate information and data that can form the basis of effective planning. In the view of Asaju, Arome and Anyio (2014) and Iwayemi (2014), employment data are very hard to obtain, even from statutory institutions and agencies established for gathering socio-economic data. Where unemployment registers exist at all, they are limited to urban areas, and, in fact, not all those searching for employment attempt to register. In the absence of such data, policymakers tend to rely on cross-sectional household surveys, which are often inconsistent and full of errors. This lack of data makes it difficult for policymakers to understand the nature of the employment challenge and make informed decisions on how to support young people in the labour market. This situation in most cases leads to flawed and inconsistent public policies on employment, thus aggravating unemployment in the state.

(vi) Poor economic growth rate: One major factor that account for the high rate of unemployment in Nigeria and Akwa Ibom State is the poor economic growth that has characterized the system over the years. This, as Tairu (2003) opined, is the most critical determinant factors of unemployment. The situation in the country since 1990s to date has been hostile to economic growth and development. The clear evidence of high level of indiscipline, such as corruption, mismanagement of public funds, harsh economic policies and the insecurity of the Nigerian environment among other factors have damaged the spirit of economic growth for a long time. Analysts described the economic situation in Nigeria in the 1990s as a lost decade in terms of economic growth. This terrible situation accounts for the worsening scenario of unemployment over the years.

In recent times the high level of inflation, devaluation of the our currency in comparative terms with the United State dollar, soaring cost of food items and other essentials of life has compounded the economic woes of the nation, making the citizenry more impoverished and economically feeble. Under this circumstance the country cannot grow economically because the purchasing power of the citizens has been decimated and their real income can no longer take care of their basic needs, hence, the high level of poverty and unemployment witnessed in the country and the state in contemporary times.

(vii) Wrong impression about technical and vocational education: The general trend among young people in Nigerian society, as Damachi (2001) observed, is an enduring biased attitude against technical and vocational education. This negative impression contributes to the high rate of unemployment in Nigeria in recent times. A large number of job seekers lack practical skills that could enhance self-employment. This is why rather than becoming

employers of labour and providing jobs for others, the graduates and unemployed persons keep depending on the government and the non-vibrant private sector for job opportunities.

Socio-Economic Realities of Youth Unemployment in Akwa Ibom State

According to Blanchflower and Freeman (1999), the lack of job prospects and the likelihood of a desolate future for unemployed youth have contributed to socially deviant behaviour such as prostitution, armed robbery, kidnapping for ransom, drug addiction, political thuggery and so on. Crime and violence have been increasing in many parts of Nigeria among unemployed young people. Youth gangsterism is viewed as substitute to families, typically satisfying the economic and social needs of unemployed young people through violence. According to UN-Habitat (2008), many young people enter the criminal world at a very young age and end up becoming victims of crime themselves; become criminals even indulging in killings and robberies as a result of the frustration and helplessness. This is the situation currently prevalent in Nigeria and Akwa Ibom State in particular, with detrimental consequences including:

Impact on society: Youth are the most active and productive members of the society, and non-unemployment of the majority of them has negatively affected members of the society as many can no longer freely go about their normal businesses for fear of being kidnapped for ransom or robbed in broad day light (Abudah, 2004). As asserted by Guneen (2002), crime is directly connected to high rates of youth unemployment. In effect, unemployment accounts for most of the social vices perpetrated by youth in the Nigerian society today.

Impact on the economy: Unemployed youth are considered as a burden to the economy as they contribute nothing and consume the produce. On the other hand, families with unemployed youth with no source of income generation, as prevalent in the rural areas, face many economic challenges such as unavailability of health, education and other essential necessities of life (Asobie, 2004).

Personal well-being: Unemployment in Nigeria has a serious negative effect on the personal well-being of the unemployed. In cross sectional regressions, there is clear evidence that unemployment is associated with lower levels of psychological well-being (Machin and Manning, 1998). Moreover, due to frustration that results to the inability of engaging in a gainful employment, most youth turn to drugs and even go ahead to be addicted to it.

High level of poverty: Poverty is a state or condition in which a person or community lack the financial resources and essentials to enjoy a minimum standard of life and well-being that is considered acceptable in society. It is a contagious and debilitating effect of unemployment (Ibikunle, Orefuwa, and Mafo, 2019).

Social crimes: With the growth of youth unemployment, the gap between the rich and the poor kept growing, resulting in social tensions which could affect the entire sphere of the community, state and the entire country as exemplified in the Niger-Delta militancy, North-East, North-Central insurgents killing, etc. (Ibikunle *et al.*, 2019). The accelerating level of prostitution, armed robbery, rape and all facets of violence can largely be attributed to the incidence of unemployment. Akinrinde (2007) stressed that Nigeria becoming more urbanized has increased the proportion of armed robbery cases. In the opinion of Abomaye-Nimenibo (2015), the culture of spraying money at social occasions by the rich instigates the poor youth to involve in armed robbery and other forms of violence to earn a living.

Economic growth: The adverse effect of high unemployment on the domestic economy cannot be quantified. The availability of abundant human resources if utilized could serve as great

catalyst to economic growth but if otherwise, could exert negative influence on the economy. The unutilized large quantum of human resources in Nigeria due to non-availability of employment opportunities has continued to impede on the prospect of growth in several ways. The resulting effects of unemployment such as perpetration of violence and general insecurity threaten economic growth and development to a large extent (Abomaye-Nimenibo, 2015).

Towards Reducing Youth Unemployment in Akwa Ibom State

It is a known fact that the future of any State lies on its youth; no wonder successive Nigerian governments placed emphasis on the training and empowerment of youth as the principal means of securing their future. Again, government, organizations and individuals are not oblivious of the negative impacts of unemployment to the socio-economic development of the state and the nation at large. Hence, several policies and programmes have been instituted by the Akwa Ibom State government, past and present, to empower the youth and ameliorate the scourge of unemployment among its citizens particularly the youth. These programmes range from technical and vocational training in various skills, agro-allied businesses, and grant/soft loan to enable the youth acquire the needed capital to start small scale businesses and become entrepreneurs.

The Akwa Ibom Enterprise and Entrepreneurial Scheme (AKEES) is one of the key programmes aimed at empowering the youth on enterprise and entrepreneurial development and the Ibom 3000-project with the sole objective of training 3000 young Akwa Ibomites, one thousand from each from the three senatorial districts of the state on oil and gas development, information and communication technology (ICT), business development and management skills, health safety and environment (HSE) etc.

Furthermore, there is the integrated farmers' scheme programme (IFS) with the objectives of training the youth on agriculture related businesses to replace the aging farming population in the state and empowering them to be self-reliant in agricultural production. The integrated farmers' scheme programme give starter packs to beneficiaries to engage in crop planting, poultry, livestock rearing and any other agro-allied businesses of their choice. The Dakkada youth policy is another initiative of the state government with the goals of empowering rural youth on wealth creation. Those who are beneficiaries get monthly stipend of thirty thousand naira (₦30,000) to boost their businesses for a specified period of time.

In addition to empowerment programmes above, the Akwa State government over the years adopted the federal government programmes designed to curb unemployment and poverty in the country to complement that of the state government. Such programmes include Akwa Ibom State Economic and Empowerment Development Strategy (AK-SEEDS), National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P), FADAMA Graduate Unemployed Youth and Women Scheme (FADAMA-GUYS) and recently, the N-Power Programme. Unfortunately, none of these programmes seems to affect the youth positively due to poor co-ordination and implementation. The programmes are always marred by corruption and inefficiency. Politicians use the programmes as a political patronage to compensate their supporters thereby depriving the supposed beneficiaries of such programmes.

However, with all these lofty policies and programmes of government aimed at employment creation in the state, the state is bedevilled with the scourge of unemployment particularly among the youth population as reported by the National Bureau of Statistics. These goes to show that the effort of government of Akwa Ibom State, though commendable, has not yielded the needed result of pulling people out of poverty and creating employment for the citizens. The implication of the above scenario is that while the state continues to channel resources into these programmes, there exists a corresponding increase in the level of unemployment in the state. This brings to question the capacity, workability and implementation strategies of these policies and programmes vis-a-vis employment creation in the state.

The Akwa Ibom State government should consider re-introducing the school-to-land programme which is another area that the youth can be empowered. The school to land programme was a laudable programme in the early 1980s. Through the programme, youth were given training in fish farming, poultry farming and other agricultural skills. This no doubt helped in reducing unemployment rate among young school leavers. Today nothing is heard about the school-to-land programme. With the resuscitating of the programme by the Akwa Ibom State government, many unemployed youth can be gainfully employed especially as there are limited employment opportunities in corporate organizations.

The state government can achieve this by building school-to-land facilities in all local government areas in Akwa Ibom State, equipping the centres and encouraging young school leavers to take up farming as their occupation. Agriculture as we know today is the mainstay of many countries' economies like Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines. These countries have turned around their economies through a well-developed agricultural sector with tremendous benefits including food sufficiency, shelter and most importantly employment to its citizens.

CONCLUSION

This paper has established the interplay between youth unemployment and the negative socio-economic realities in Nigeria with inference drawn from Akwa Ibom State. From the analysis in the preceding sections, it is apparent that the Nigerian state has not lived up to its responsibility of providing good life to the citizenry. Nigeria is undoubtedly one of the potentially rich countries of the world on account of her natural and human resources. The country's population is progressively growing at an average of 3.5 percent yearly, with a current population of about 206 million, out of which a greater proportion (about 35 percent) are the unemployed youth.

Youth unemployment has become one of the greatest challenges of the Nigerian economy and has maintained an escalating trend over the years, hence, constituting a societal problem in the country. From inception of Nigeria as a nation, the subject of unemployment has always been of great concern to the government, policymakers, economists and well-meaning Nigerians from all walks of life. Akwa Ibom State is not insulated from this quagmire. Despite the fact that the State is blessed with arable lands for all-year-round agricultural production, large deposit of mineral resources like crude oil, gas and solid minerals, even as it is one of the highest revenue earner from the federation monthly account, the rate of unemployment in the state is frightening. The National Bureau of Statistics in its 2021 report placed Akwa Ibom

State in the third position on the unemployment ranking of the country, notwithstanding the state's government claim of industrial revolution and creation of employment.

Over the years, the curricula of higher institutions have not been upgraded to meet the challenges of the new millennium leading to the inability of the graduates to become self-reliant. Thus, the teeming population of graduates turned out from the tertiary institutions look on to the public service for employment. Some frustrated youth have become aggressive and engaged in violent crimes against the state that has refused to provide the enabling environment for their self-actualization, while some others have been engaged by political gladiators in activities that can undermine the country's democratic process. This has led many Nigerians to insinuate that virtually all cases of civil unrest in the state in particular and Nigeria at large are carried out by unemployed youth who tend to be restive, as a way of ventilating their grievances and frustration.

In candid terms, though the government has put in place well-articulated and formulated policies and programmes, with a view to reducing the level of unemployment in the state, these have not been judiciously implemented. One would have expected that with the initiatives, policies and alleged industrialization crusade of the Akwa Ibom State government, there would be a downward trend on the unemployment situation in the state. This calls to question the genuineness of the implementers of the programmes, the implementation strategies and the need for a review of the policies.

Therefore, the need to aptly address the ugly trend of youth unemployment in the state becomes paramount. While the government takes the leading role in the task of employment generation by providing the necessary enabling environment for economic activities, it is necessary to note that the battle against unemployment in Nigeria is like war that is too important to be left for the generals alone. Hence, all stakeholders and hands must be on deck in the fight against the ugly snag of unemployment so that Nigerian youth can enjoy the dividend of development experienced through gainful expertise.

Recommendations

Deriving from the analysis in the preceding sections and the observed realities, this paper advanced that for Akwa Ibom State, the way out of youth unemployment and its corresponding undesirable consequences are:

- (i) Concerted effort should be directed at redesigning the education sector to become technology-based in order to enhance skill acquisition for self-employment. This entails reviewing the school curricula to ensure a synchronization of the world of learning and the world of work by prioritizing technical and vocational education.
- (ii) Youth should be encouraged to embrace agriculture as a lucrative business venture in the state. This can be achieved through reorienting of the minds of the youth from non-existing white collar jobs. This requires revitalizing the sector through modernization of the rural areas as well as provision of basic infrastructures.
- (iii) The Akwa Ibom State government should make honest effort towards revitalizing the moribund and ailing industries in the State. In the meantime, the state government should collaborate with the organized private sector in providing viable centres for skills acquisition in each local government area in the state.

- (iv) Enabling environment for economic growth should be created in the state. An economic environment that is friendly to cottage, small and medium scale enterprises will invariably launch the private sector into full potentials. When this is done, private investment will be stimulated and thus help to diversify the avenues to absorb unemployed youth in the state.
- (v) Development programmes meant to reduce youth unemployment should be redesigned to reflect on the needs and aspirations of the targeted population, instead of fulfilling the interests of the few in positions of authority. Apart from planning with adequate and reliable statistics, the planning and implementation strategy should be bottom-up as planning from above underestimates the enormity of socio-economic problems, principally, unemployment in the state.
- (vi) There should be a process of proper implementation, monitoring and evaluation of any programme geared toward training youth in the state in act of entrepreneurship that will promote their living standards. A team of trusted individuals with proven track record and integrity should be set up for this purpose, and anybody found culpable of diverting funds meant for the programmes should be prosecuted.
- (vii) The state government in collaboration with the State Civil Service Commission should ensure regular exit of retired workers as well as unproductive ones to give room for youth who are qualified, able and willing to work.

References

- Abomaye-Nimenibo, W. A. S. (2015). The Socio-Economic Effects of Youth Unemployment in Akwa Ibom State: A Study of Uyo Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. *Journal of Economics*, 3(6), 1-18.
- Adegun, A. O. and Akomolafe, O. A. (2018). Entrepreneurial Education and Youth Empowerment in Contemporary Nigeria. *Scholarly Journal of Education*, 2(5), 52-57.
- Ajayi, N. E. and Nwogwugwu, F. I. (2014). Entrepreneurship Development and Employment Generation in Nigeria: Problems and Prospects. *Universal Journal of Education and General Studies*, 1(4), 88-102.
- Akande, T. (2014). *Youth Unemployment in Nigeria: A Situation Analysis*. Washington DC: Brookings Institution.
- Akinrinde, A. (2007). Sustainable Development as a Strategy for Conflict Resolution: The Case of Niger Delta. Retrieved from: <http://ogele.org/featuresnigerdelta2html>
- Akoda, W. E. (2010). Youth and National Security in the Niger-Delta Region Since 1966. In Ashafa, A. M. (Ed.), *Challenges for Nigeria at 50: Essays in Honour of Professor Abdullahi Mahadi*. Kaduna: Kaduna State University Press.
- Alanana, O. O. (2003). Youth Unemployment in Nigeria: Some Implications for the Third Millennium. *Global Journal of Social Science*, 2(1), 21-26.
- Asaju, K., Arome, S. and Anyio, S. F. (2014). The Rising Rate of Unemployment in Nigeria the Socio-economic and Political Implications. *Global Business and Economic Research Journal*, 3(2), 12-32.
- Asobie, A. (2004). *Conflict Resolution and Human Rights: A Case Study Approach*. Ibadan: E-Watch Print.
- Blanchflower, D. and Freeman, R. B. (1999). *Youth Employment and Joblessness in Advanced Countries*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Damachi, N. A. (2001). Evaluation of Past Policy Measures for Solving Unemployment Problem in Nigeria. *CBN Bulletin*, 25(4), 43-58.

-
- Dei-Tumi, E. (2011). National Youth Entrepreneurship Policy. *Speech Delivered during a Workshop Organized by the Institute of Continuing and Distance Education, University of Ghana, 21 October 2011.*
- Dollard, J., Doob, L., Miller, N., Mowrer, O. and Sears, R. (1939). *Frustration and Aggression*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Ejiogu, A. (2011). Challenges of Educating Nigerian Youth for the 21st Century. In Nwagwu, E. T., Ehiametator, M. A. and Ogunu, M. N (Eds.), *Current Issues in Educational Administration in Nigeria*. Benin City: Nigerian Association for Educational Administration and Planning (NAEAP)
- Ekpo, A. H. (2006). Child-Labour, Child/Teenage Prostitution, Youth Illiteracy and Unemployment in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. In Akpan, G. E. and Ekong, C. N. (Eds.), *Youth Empowerment for Sustainable Development*. Uyo: Minder International.
- Falusi, A. O. (2014). Employment Generation for Poverty Reduction in Nigeria: Issues for Consideration. *Paper Presented at the 21st Celebration of the Development Policy Centre in Memory of Professor Ojetunji Aboyade, 9 September.*
- Federal Government of Nigeria (2009). *National Youth Policy*. Abuja: Federal Government Press.
- Guneeun, S. C. (2002). *Juvenile Justice, Youth and Crime in Nigeria*. Abuja: Manipas Publishers.
- Ibikunle, G. A., Orefuwa, E. R., Mafo, A. B. (2019). Analysis of the Causes and Effects of Unemployment in Nigeria towards a Solution for Graduate Idleness and Poverty Alleviation. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 24(2), 36-44.
- Igwenagu, E. (2022). Akwa Ibom State Population 2022. *Nigerian Informer*. <https://nigerianinformer.com/akwa-ibom-state-population/>
- International Labour Organization (ILO) (1982). *Resolutions Concerning Statistics of the Economically Active Population and Underemployment*. Geneva: ILO
- Iwayemi, A. (2013). Youth Unemployment in Nigeria: Challenges and Way Forward. *Paper Presented at the World Bank Regional Workshop on Youth, Abuja, 23-24 July.*
- Machin, S. and Manning, A. (1998). *The Causes and Consequences of Long-Term Unemployment in Europe*. London: Centre of Economic Performance, School of Economics.
- National Bureau of Statistics (2020). *Population of Youth in Nigeria*. Abuja: NBS.
- National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) (2021). *Unemployment Ranking of States in Nigeria*. Abuja: NBS.
- National Population Commission (2002). *National and State Population Projections*. Abuja: NPC.
- Nnabuchi, O. A. (2013). Addressing the Challenges of Unemployment in Nigeria. *Nigerian Journal of Public Administration and Local Government*, 17(1), 130-144.
- Nwangwu, E. J. (2014). Unemployment and Poverty in Nigeria: A Link to National Insecurity. *Global Journal of Politics and Law Research*, 2(1), 19-25.
- Ogwuibe, C. O and Olorunfemi, G. O. (2018). Youth Entrepreneurship as a Tool for Economic Development in Nigeria. *Nigerian Journal of Public Administration and Local Government*, 17(1), 102-112.
- Okafor, E. E. (2011). *Youth Unemployment and Implications for Stability of Democracy in Nigeria*. Ibadan: Department of Sociology, University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

- Okoli, F. C. (2004). *Theory and Practice of Local Government: A Nigerian Perspective*. Enugu: John Jacob's Classic Publishers.
- Osakwe, C. (2013). Youth, Unemployment and National Security in Nigeria. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 3(21), 258-268.
- Sasu, D. K. (2022). Forecast Unemployment Rate in Nigeria 2021-2022. *Trading Economics*. Retrieved from: <https://tradingeconomics.com/nigeria/unemployment-rate>
- Tairu, B. (2003). Attacking Unemployment Hurdles in the Fragile Economies of the Sub-Saharan Africa: The Experience of Nigeria. *A Paper Presented at the Economics for the Future Conference on the Occasion of the Celebration of 100 Years of Cambridge Economics, Cambridge, United Kingdom*.
- Ugwu, S. (2009). Youth Empowerment as Sustainable Economic and Rural Development: A Paradigm for Conflict Resolution. *Nigerian Journal of Public Administration and Local Government*, 14(1&2), 126-136.
- UN-Habitat (2008). *Reducing Urban Crimes and Violence: Policy Directions*. London: Earthscan.
- United Nations (2007). *World Youth Report: Young People's Transition to Adulthood Progress and Challenges*. New York: United Nations.
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2015). *Human Development Reports*. New York: UNDP.
- World Bank (2008). *The Economic Development of Nigeria*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.