
UNEMPLOYMENT AND POVERTY IN NIGERIA: A LINK TO NATIONAL INSECURITY

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ABSTRACT: *The majority of Nigeria population, the poor people in affluent society, is enmeshed in the net of poverty. The Nigerian government seem to have failed in its contractual obligation to respect and sustain its social contract with the people. There is a seemingly total collapse of social security, increase in unemployment rate and consequently inbreed of youth restiveness. This study sets out to investigate the relationship between unemployment, poverty and insecurity of lives and properties in the country. The primary objective of this article is to ascertain whether the increased wave of violence in Nigeria is as a result of unemployment and poverty. The study underscores that unemployment and poverty are universal phenomena, not necessarily a peculiar characteristic of any particular segment of the society. The research revealed that unemployment and poverty have direct link to security challenges in Nigeria. There is need for a radical reform in the areas of skill acquisition centres, agricultural development scheme for creation of employment opportunities and holistic restructuring of peace building mechanisms to curb these social ills and reposition the drifting nation to a more purposeful track.*

KEYWORDS: Unemployment, Poverty, Violence, Insecurity of Lives and Properties

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is the most populous black African country with a population of about 150 million made up of over 250 ethnic groups (NPC, 2006). The majority of the population is enmeshed in the net of abject poverty due to faulty economic policies and unsustainable poverty alleviation programmes of successive governments. The essence of development is to achieve satisfactory standard of living of the people within the existing or improved structural framework. The primary focus of economic development of any nation is to positively transform the wellbeing of individual citizens and better the human living conditions. Nigeria is a wealthy country with majority of its population living below the poverty line. The rural dwellers and the urban ghetto inhabitants, gripped firmly by the clutches of poverty in an affluent nation, are the major victims of Nigeria's backwardness and apparent underdevelopment. These areas lack basic infrastructures like accessible roads, pipe borne water, functional educational system, cottage industries, functional healthcare delivery services, poor communication, absence of transportation, electricity, decent and affordable homes, etc. These features are a reflection of a country's gross domestic product (GDP) and other aggregate economic indicators which serve as the yardstick upon which the economic status of a sovereign nation is being measured. The concentration of the disadvantaged in inner-city ghettos and the isolation of these areas from more affluent communities compound the problems of the poor. This social isolation leads to economic isolation and impoverishment. Simply being poor does not make an individual a part of the "underclass". Indeed, the underclass constitutes a minority of the poor. The underclass is a core of inner-city poor, those individuals and families who are trapped in an unending cycle of joblessness and dependence on welfare or

criminal earnings. Their communities are often plagued by drug abuse, lawlessness, crime, violence, filthy environment with dotted shanty structures and poor schools (Okeke, 2001; Zanden, 1996). According to Marks (1991), high inner-city rates of family disintegration, welfare dependency, drug abuse and crime are additional outcomes of faulty economic organization. Many underclass women were teenage mothers and high school dropouts who subsequently found themselves sidetracked without the resources or skills to escape a life of poverty. In contemporary societies, the rise of female headed families is associated with the inability of underclass men to secure steady jobs for sustenance of their livelihood. Poverty derives from lack of income-producing employment is passed on from generation to generation un-end.

Poverty in Nigeria remains significant despite high economic growth it sustained during the colonial era. Nigeria has one of the world's highest economic growth rates [averaging 7.4% over the last decade], a well-developed economy, and plenty of natural resources like oil, which has turned out to be the main stay of the economy. In spite of the wonderful credential, the country retains a high level of poverty, with 63% of its population living below US\$1 per day, which implies a decline in equity. Successive governments have made robust attempts to alleviate poverty. Such notable programmes include 1972 National Accelerated Food Production Programme and the Nigerian Agricultural and Co-operative Bank; 1976 Operation Feed the Nation aimed at teaching the rural farmers how to use modern farming tools; 1979 Green Revolution Programme structured to reduce food importation and increase in local food production above subsistence farming; 1986 Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure [DFRRI]; 1993 Family Support Programme and the Family Economic Advancement Programme; 2001 National Poverty Eradication Programme [NAPEP], designed to boost and sustain poverty alleviation programme in Nigeria. All these programmes have failed woefully and have defiled all economic policies initiated to tackle poverty. The persistent of poverty in Nigeria is due to income inequality, long term ethno-religious conflicts, civil unrest, and political instability. For instance, income inequality worsened from 0.43% to 0.49% between 2004 and 2009. This is correlated with differential access to infrastructure and amenities. Specifically, there are more rural poor than urban poor. This is as a result of the composition of Nigeria's economy, especially the energy (oil) and agriculture sectors. Oil exports contribute significantly to government revenues and about 15% of GDP, despite the fact that only a tiny fraction of the population is gainfully employed. Nonetheless, agriculture contributes about 45% of GDP, and gainfully employed close to 90% of the rural populace. This apparent incongruence is further compounded by the fact that oil revenue is poorly distributed among the citizens while government, on the other hand, spends relatively higher in urban areas than the rural axis. High rates of unemployment weakens personal incomes and aggravates social vices in the society. The lopsided pattern of distributing societal benefits, placing certain ethnic tribe and/or geo-political region in perpetual disadvantage, is a major source of violent conflicts.

Inequality among a people in a society is sustained by how the wealth of the nation is being generated and distributed among the competing factors, individuals and/or groups of people in the society. A malfunctioning distributive system or inequality in the distribution of available resources within a society, even where the country is endowed with abundant resources, there is every tendency that few privileged people in positions of authority would be enjoying the best living conditions at the detriment of the majority who would be languishing in a state of abject

poverty. This scenario depicts perfectly the dysfunctional distributive system in the management of the abundant resources in Nigeria. The objective of this study therefore is to investigate the activities of government to alleviate the poor from the prevailing economic hardship and disadvantaged social stratum, and to investigate the relationship between unemployment, poverty and insecurity of lives and properties in the country. The primary thrust of the article is to ascertain whether the increased wave of violence in Nigeria is as a result of youth unemployment and poverty.

Poverty: Who is a poor person? The concept “poverty” has been defined from various approaches by scholars of divergent ideological perspectives. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) defines poverty as that income level below which a minimum nutritionally adequate diet together with essential non-food requirements are not affordable. Poverty is grouped by UNDP in three broad categories as contained in the universally accepted definition to mean absolute poverty, relative and material poverty. Absolute poverty means the inability to provide such physiological subsistence (i.e. foods, shelter, clothing, potable water, safety, healthcare service, basic education, transportation and gainful employment) to the extent of being unable to protect human dignity. People under this category receive meagre income and their capacity to make savings is zero. Relative poverty means inadequate income to enhance active participation in societal activities to the extent that it limits the actualization of one’s potentials. In this type of poverty, the minimum requirements of an individual is determined by caloric intake of square metres of shelter per person. Poverty here means inability of one to satisfy his basic social needs. Material poverty is the deprivation of physical assets such as cash-crop trees, land, animal husbandry, etc. (UNDP, 1994:221; Uzuegbunam, 2001).

Poverty is relatively of the mind. Therefore, a family considered very poor at Lecky Island in Lagos State may be considered to be a very wealthy family in New Haven, Enugu State of the same country. A man who cannot fend for his family due to lack of income-producing employment is suffering from deprivative poverty caused by imbalance in the distribution of social benefits. It is true that unemployment and poverty are universal phenomena, it is not necessarily a peculiar characteristic of any particular segment of the society nor is it a property of the poor developing countries of the third world. As Eitzen (1980) succinctly observed, the United States is envied by most people of the world because it is a blessed country with great natural resources, it possesses the most advanced technology known, very wealthy nation and a magnanimous donor to many developing countries, it has a very high standard of living, and a world power of the first order. In spite of all these wonderful credentials, a significant portion of American citizens live in a condition of poverty. Millions of Americans are ill-fed, ill-clothed, and ill-housed. These same millions are discriminated against in the schools, in worship places, in the courts, in the job market, and in the market place; which has the effect of trapping many of them in less than desirable conditions. It is thus being contend that poverty is a product of our corporate society. Some people are poor because society has failed to provide equality in education, prevalence of institutional discrimination against minorities, failure of private sector to provide sufficient job opportunities and technology has rendered some jobs obsolete. Therefore, the victims of poverty are not to be blamed for their condition; rather the inequities prevalent in Nigerian society are responsible. The causes of poverty are inequality in money and in opportunity. Some opposing views emerged from radical scholars who contend that the poor are to be blamed for their plight because they are

thought to be lazy. Poverty is perceived by these scholars as the result of people being lazy, stupid, wasteful, and immoral. While others are of the view that poverty is a generational curse that is being passed on from one generation to another.

The Consequences of Poverty: It is a curse to be poor – mental poverty, intellectual poverty, moral poverty, material poverty, spiritual poverty, psychological poverty, etc. The thesis of this article is centred on material, mental and intellectual poverty. Lack of representation in decision making in the society and lack of freedom to express oneself is a consequence of poverty. To be poor is to be powerless. It also means being despised and looked down upon. It means being treated unfairly. Most significantly, it means lacking things that translate into good physical and mental health. Karl Marx noted that the key to the class structure is economics. The extent of an individual's wealth is the determining factor for success in a number of crucial area, including the chance to live and the chance to obtain possessions and education that are highly valued in society. The term "life chances" refers to opportunities throughout the life-cycle one has to live and to experience the good things in life. These chances depend almost exclusively on the economic circumstances of the family to which one is born. Therefore, it is a divine blessing to be born in a wealthy family. Some genius from very wretched families have transformed their lives from poverty to wealthiness through perseverance in their different fields of endeavour. Richness in this context is not always a matter of inheritance. The poor perceive as most important changes that might improve their lives as better job opportunities, availability of more school facilities, and more job-training. The priorities of the poor for their children welfare are learning to stay in school, getting proper training to hold down good jobs to sustain their families, earning living wages to cope with family and social challenges, living dignified lives to earn respect and prestige of other people. Where attainment of these desirabilities are difficult to overcome, the poor would feel depressed and may resort to hostilities against those they perceived as being responsible for their miserable conditions.

Incidence of Poverty in Nigeria

The incidence of poverty in Nigeria has increased since 1980. The Federal Office of Statistics (1999) reported that while poverty incidence was 28.1% in 1980, it rose to 46.3% in 1985 and decreased to 42.7% in 1992 and later rose to 65.6% in 1996. In 2004 it decreased to 54.7 as shown in the figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Poverty Trend in Nigeria, 1980 – 2004 (in %)

Year	Poverty Level (%)	Estimated Total Population	Poverty Population
1980	28.1	65 million	17.7 million
1985	46.3	75 million	34.7 million
1992	42.7	91.5 million	39.2 million
1996	65.6	102.3 million	67.1 million
2004	54.7	126.3 million	69.09 million

Source: National Bureau of Statistics (2007).

Nigeria's poverty level in 1996 was 65.6% and the poverty population was 67.1 million. The incidence of poverty during this period was high and this demonstrates the magnitude of agony the poor have been going through in this country. The 2007 poverty assessment underscores the fact that Nigeria has undergone five national poverty surveys between 1980 and 2004. Poverty

incidence reduced from 65.6% in 1996 with a poverty population of 67.1 million to 54.7% with an increased poverty population of 69.09 million, applying the absolute poverty index. The survey reveals that the 2004 figure showed 20% point gap between the poverty incidence of the urban and rural households. As 43.1% of urban household were poor, 63.8% of the rural households were also poor. This demonstrates the disparity in accessing opportunities and infrastructures among the different households as illustrated below (National Bureau of Statistics, 2007; Nwagwu, 2009:224). It is also observed that the percentage of non-poor reduced from 43.3 in 2004 to 31.0 in 2010. Moderately poor indicator exhibited a decrease from 32.4 to 30.3, and that of extremely poor increased from 22.0 to 38.7. Similarly, the survey equally revealed that relative poverty measurement stood at 54.4% in 2004, increased to 69% in 2010; while absolute poverty measurement that stood at 54.7% in 2004, rose to 93.9% in 2010. The report also revealed that the proportion of those living on less than US\$1 per day which was 51.6% in 2004, rose to 61.2% in 2010. This accounts for the placement of Nigeria's misery index at 34% by the National Bureau of Statistics (2007), a development which analysts described as "horribly terrifying". The misery index measures the level of hardship in a country and is calculated using the unemployment and inflation rates of the country.

Figure 2: Relative Poverty by Sector (Urban and Rural)

Year	Urban (%)	Rural (%)	Non-Poor (%)	Moderately Poor (%)	Extremely Poor (%)
1980	16.2	28.3	72.8	21.0	6.2
1985	37.8	51.4	53.7	34.0	12.1
1992	37.5	46.0	57.3	28.9	13.9
1996	58.2	69.3	34.4	36.3	29.3
2004	43.1	63.8	43.3	32.4	22.0
2010	-	-	31.0	30.3	38.7

Source: National Bureau of Statistics (2007); The Nigeria Poverty Profile 2010; National Bureau of Statistics (2012).

The Central Bank of Nigeria's report in 1999 revealed that the overall poverty rate in Nigeria as at 1997 was 69% (National Bureau of Statistics, 2005). Aigbokhan (1998) used food energy intake measure to determine the incidence of national poverty to be 38% in 1985, 43% in 1992, and 47% in 1996. The National Bureau of Statistics suggested that the application of the food energy intake measure would result 34.9% as poverty incidence in 2004. The relative poverty trend revealed that the incidence of poverty rose from 28.1% in 1980 to 46.3% in 1985, but declined to 42.7% in 1992. The trend later rose to 65.6% in 1996 before finally decreasing to 54.4% in 2004 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2005). This is the reflection of poverty incidence at the national level. Inferences have been drawn from selected states in the Niger Delta region (as illustrated below) to further buttress the argument. The Niger Delta is part of Nigeria, therefore, the poverty incidence situation at the national level touches all parts of the country. However, Rivers and Bayelsa States poverty incidence were recorded to have stabilized at around 44% after its first rise from 7%, the poverty level rose between 1980 and 1996 as shown in figure 3. According to the national estimate, poverty incidence declined between 1996 and 2004 (UNDP, 2006). The trend has not changed significantly.

Figure3: Incidence of Poverty in Nigeria/Niger Delta Region, 1980 – 2004

	1980	1985	1992	1996	2004		
Nigeria	28.1	46.3	42.7	65.6	54.4		
Edo/Delta	19.8	52.4	33.9	56.1		Delta	45.35
						Edo	33.09
Cross River	10.2	41.9	45.5	66.9			41.61
Imo/Abia	14.4	33.1	49.9	56.2		Imo	27.39
						Abia	22.27
Ondo	24.9	47.3	46.6	71.6			42.15
Rivers/Bayelsa	7.2	44.4	43.4	44.3		Rivers	29.09
						Bayelsa	19.98

Source: National Bureau of Statistics, 2004

Poverty is the product of poor management of human and material resources. Bad governance breeds corruption and it disadvantages majority of the poor masses, particularly the rural dwellers who are worst hit. If government husbands the national resources judiciously, and build confidence among the population through equal distribution of the social benefits to cater for the poor who are in majority, the gap between the rich and the poor would be bridged to cement cordial relation between all strata of the society. Functional healthcare services, availability of genuine drugs at affordable prices and highly qualified medical practitioners to man local health centres would reduce child mortality and improve life expectancy. According to the 1999 estimate records of the Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) conducted by the National Population Commission, the infant and child mortality rates in Nigeria were in the range of 71 and 67 per 1,000; while the South-South region were estimated at about 48 and 35 per 1,000 respectively. Figure 4 below illustrates the clearer picture of the zonal situations in 2003. The South-South region performed poorly on neonatal, post-neonatal and infant mortality, with the worst post-neonatal mortality rate in Nigeria. Considering immunization against measles, a report on this revealed that the proportions of fully immunized under-one-year-old are 61.5% for males and 49.5% for females. Report from the NDHS shows that only 20.8% of the children between 12 and 23 months had been vaccinated against the killer diseases as opposed to 32.5% and 44.6% in the South-West and South-East regions respectively. Besides, 25.1% of children with acute respiratory infections and fever sought treatment from health providers, as against 52.6% and 49.5% in the South-West and North-Central regions respectively as shown below.

Figure 4: Child and Infant Mortality Rates by the Regions of Nigeria (%)

Regional Zones	Neonatal mortality	Post-neonatal mortality	Infant mortality	Child mortality	Under-five mortality
National	53	56	109	121	217
North-Central	53	49	103	70	165
North-East	61	65	125	154	260
North-West	55	59	114	176	269
South-East	34	32	66	40	103
South-South	53	68	120	63	103
South-West	39	30	69	47	113

Source: UNDP Report, 2006.

Poverty is the major cause of high child and infant mortality rates in Nigeria. Unemployment and lack of access to regular means of livelihood in many households exacerbates the conditions of the poor people in the rural areas. Ignorance and low level of education contribute also to worsen the situation as evident above. Government's insufficient provision of budgetary allocations for health and education sectors and untimely release of the meagre (and ever decreasing paltry) sum to these essential areas of the economy seemed to have unduly exacerbated the problems of the sectors. This worrisome trend in our march towards national development stunts human capital development, breed illiterate and unskillful population and serves as recruitment grounds for combatant armies of miscreant as shown below:

Figure 5: Percentage of Total Budget Allocation to Education and Health Sectors in Nigeria (1999-2012)

Year	% Allocation to Education Sector	% Allocation to Health Sector
1999	13.14	10.29
2000	12.24	6.15
2001	10.29	8.79
2002	13.19	9.28
2003	7.28	4.71
2004	8.56	5.50
2005	8.56	6.99
2006	10.02	6.94
2007	10.34	7.40
2008	10.07	7.79
2009	4.09	6.98
2010	6.95	5.49
2011	8.0	5.1
2012	8.43	5.95

Source: CBN Statistical Bulletin, 2010; Federal Government of Nigeria 2011 and 2012 Budgets

It is evident in the above illustration that the percentage of budget allocation to education and health sectors dwindled from 13.14 and 10.29 in 1999 to 8.43 and 5.95 in 2012 respectively. The decreasing annual budget allocations to these sectors account for poor health delivery service and low standard of education in Nigeria. This unhealthy situation corroborates Global Monitoring Report 2012 which revealed that 10.5 million Nigerian children of school-going age are not attending school – the highest in world record. Besides, the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Report Index, 2011 to 2012 which ranked Nigeria 140th out of 144 countries in primary education enrolment (Adamolekun, 2013). Education sector appears to be the worst hit as the performance of students in the external examinations in the past five years is worrisome. For instance, the percentages of students that obtained five credits in English Language and Mathematics in the May/June WAEC are thus: 23% (2008); 26% (2009); 24% (2010); 31% (2011); and 39% (2012). Also, the percentage of students who scored 200 and above (out of 400 score) in Joint Admission and Matriculation Board in the last four years range from 46% in 2009 to 36% in 2010 with overall average of 42%. In the same vein, three candidates scored above 300 and five percent of the candidates scored 250 and above out of 1,503,93 candidates (The Nation, November 28, 2012).

Unemployment Challenges in Nigeria

Unemployment and total employment are the broadest indicator of economic activity as reflected by the labour market. The International Labour Organization (ILO) defines the unemployed as members of the economically active population who are without work but available for and seeking work, including people who have lost their jobs or who have voluntarily left work (IBRD, 2009). Morio and Zocizoum (1980) define unemployment as works available for employment whose contract of employment has terminated or been temporarily suspended and who are without a job and seeking paid employment; persons never previously employed whose most recent status was other than that of employee, 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. The expression of these definitions is that persons who are without paid jobs to earn decent living are unemployed. In Nigeria's unemployment scenario, the young school leavers of all categories are the worst hit. This cream of jobless youths belong to the major workforce of the economy but being wasted as they seek for job endlessly without success.

Morio and Zocizoum (1980) assert that in developed economy, the criteria determining the value and employability of work potential are separate from its constituent elements. Therefore, it is not the level of training which results in a particular rating, but rather the operational criterion for the training; the ability to fill a given job more quickly, which determines the social value of such training on the market. The same seems to be true of all the constituent elements of work potential; they are classed according to the essential criterion of being operational. The sooner a work potential becomes productive, the more employable it is. This would explain why young people are both more and less employable than other categories of workers. The youths are more employable because, as indicated in figure 6, they remain jobless for less time than the other age groups; in addition, they quickly adapt to a job precisely because of their youth – and paradoxically their lack of professional experience often leads to their being preferred, lower salaries being the

justification. The youths are more available, having fewer external ties (family and geographical), which on the other hand makes it easier to dismiss them without notice. Nonetheless, unemployment among educated young people in the developed market-economy countries do not linger for long as employment is secured within a given short period as illustrated hereunder.

Figure 6: Average Length of Time Spent Looking for a Job in Developed Market Economy

Age Group	Number of Months	
	Men	Women
Under 18	3.5	3.1
18 - 24	3.5	4.2
25 - 39	4.9	5.1
40 - 49	4.9	6.9
50 and above	9.5	9.5
Average	4.5	4.5

Source: Simone Morio and Yarrise Zoctizoum (1980). Two Studies on Unemployment Among Educated Young People. France: UNESCO

The prevalent situation in the developed market-economy countries where employment is secured on merit within the shortest timeframe is a mirage in developing countries like Nigeria. Except in profit-oriented private sector driven economy where employment is primarily based on merit (skill, qualifications, experience, health status, performance on aptitude test and interview), the public sector employment is an illusion, quite deceitfully elusive among highly educated graduates. It is a taboo in Nigeria today for applicants with first school leaving certificate, senior secondary school certificate or national certificate of education or university first degree to search for job in the labour market, particularly in the public sector of the economy. For example, the National Bureau of Statistics (2005) reports that the youth unemployment rate for the 15–24 years age category was 34.2%. This is almost three times the African and Global youth unemployment rates for the same age category, as well as three times the Nigerian total unemployment rate. National Bureau of Statistics (2005) illustrates that administrative data indicates that the country generates about 4.5 million new entrants into the labour market annually. This figure is made up of people out of the school system (1 million); primary school leavers not proceeding to secondary school (2.2 million); secondary school leavers not proceeding to the tertiary level (1 million); and tertiary graduates (300,000). Most often the labour market absorbs about 10% of the new entrants, thereby leaving about four million (4 million) people who are either openly unemployed or underemployed. The incredible large number accounts for the rapid growth in Nigeria's informal economy.

The Nigerian Youth Employment Action Plan (NIYEAP), 2009–2011 shows that within this timeframe of NIYEAP, the number of youths requiring productive employment would be about 13 million. This number is outrageous and quite alarming when compared with the current high rates of unemployment and underemployment among the youths. The consequences of rapid growth of youth unemployment and underemployment are naturally grave, and these are manifested in the ever growing pockets of conflicts, youth restiveness and militancy (Niger Delta youths; Movement for Actualization of Sovereign State of Biafra, Oduduwa People's Congress; Boko Haram scourge, etc.), participation in 'flourishing' organized criminal activities like

kidnapping, armed robbery, political thuggery, abduction, drug abuse, vandalization of oil pipelines and national power holding installations, and other criminal activities and/or delinquent behaviour remains the only option for the idle employable youths. With the growing rate of unemployment and underemployment of the youths, Nigeria has suffered enormous loss in terms of growth and development opportunities which would have engaged their wasteful human capital. The youth employment crisis has contributed quite substantially to the high poverty incidence estimated at 54.7% of the population or 70 million.

Trends and Pattern of Unemployment in Nigeria

The high rate of unemployment results from a relatively slow growth of labour demand which is combined with a rapidly growing labour supply in erring economy, especially due to enhanced population growth and high level of rural-urban migration. Figure 7 below indicates the national unemployment rate; figure 8 presents the distribution of the unemployed, the level of highest formal education attained; and figure 9 illustrates the incidence of unemployment in Nigeria from 2006 to 2011 (FRN, 2008).

Figure 7: Unemployment Rate (1999 – 2012) [%]

Description	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2010	2011	2012
National	19.9	18.1	13.7	12.2	14.8	11.8	11.9	5.30	21.10	23.90	24.30
(Composite)	n/a	14.2	10.3	9.5	17.1	11.0	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
- Urban	n/a	19.8	15.1	13.3	13.8	12.1	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
- Rural											

Source: National Bureau of Statistics (2006-2012). n/a = not available.

As illustrated in figure 6, the national level of unemployment has been on the downward trend since 1999 as it dropped from 19.9% to 18.1% in 2000; and by 2002 it fell to 12.2%. It rose slightly to 14.8% in 2003 and dropped to 11.8% in 2004 and had almost remained constant till 2005. A low record of 5.3% in December 2006. It increased in 2010 to 21.10%, 23.90% in 2011, and 24.30% in 2012. Nigeria unemployment rate averaged 14.6% experienced astronomical increase from 2010-2012.

According to the result of a research conducted in 2008 by the Federal Ministry of Youth Development on youth employment action plan (NIYEAP), the distribution of the unemployment by educational level, age group and gender illustrated the deterioration in the unemployment situation of post-secondary education graduates as evident in the table below. It was observed that while the general level of unemployment has been relatively stable since 2004, the employment situation of the educated was recorded to have worsened. For example, in 1999, only 7% of the educated were unemployed, and it rose to 9% in 2000; 11% in 2003 and 16.5% in 2004. Considering age, youths in the age group 15–24 are the most affected followed by those in the age group 25–44. If disaggregated by gender, the male population experience more unemployment compared to the female counterparts.

Figure 8: Shares (%) of total Unemployed by Educational Level, Age Group and Sex (1999-2004)

Description	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Educational Level						
None	20.9	11.9	14.0	16.6	11.0	14.9
Primary	12.9	26.2	21	16.1	18.3	15.8
Secondary	59.4	52.8	55.2	57.4	59.7	52.6
Post Secondary	7.0	9.1	9.7	9.9	11.0	16.5
Age Group						
15-24	58.4	59.6	59.9	49.6	54.8	52.9
25-44	29.2	31.3	34.2	35.9	35.5	41.1
45-59	7.2	6.5	4.2	5.2	3.9	2.7
60-64	5.2	2.6	4.7	9.2	6.8	3.4
Sex						
Male	53.8	54.5	56.4	59.8	55.5	58.3
Female	46.2	45.5	43.6	40.2	44.5	41.7

Source: National Bureau of Statistics (2006).

A study on the distribution of unemployment, conducted by Ogunrinola (2008) quoted in Federal Ministry of Youth Development on youth employment action plan 2009-2011 project, reveals that unemployment in Nigeria affects job seekers within the ages of 20-24 and 25-44 years more than any other age groups in Nigeria. This marks a great threat to the domestic economy since it implies that many energetic youths are without gainful employment. A breakdown analysis of the study revealed that the secondary school leavers were worst hit by the unemployment crisis in Nigeria. The study reveals that most graduates of polytechnic and university are relatively low in unemployment rate as compared to the school leavers. The same report revealed a peak of 14.0% unemployment recorded against polytechnic female graduates in 1998 while the male graduate records showed its peak in 1999 with 15.0% in urban areas. The rural area had a relatively lower unemployment rate of 6.3% for male job seekers and 5.6% for female. University graduates unemployment rate in the urban centres was 8.5% record high in September 1999 for males and 4.5% in June 1999 for females (Federal Ministry of Youth Development, 2008).

A conflicting unofficial estimate of graduate unemployment in Nigeria differs much from the official estimate. This is expressed as unofficial statistics estimates of graduate unemployment at over 30% in the urban centres as against official estimate of 15.0% within the same period under study. Unemployment among people with primary education appears to be different from other categories. For example, while school leavers and graduate unemployment phenomenon is more concentrated in the urban areas, unemployed primary school leavers and persons without education are found more in the rural areas than in the urban centres (Federal Ministry of Youth Development Project, 2008). It is evident to contend that the high rate of unemployment among the well educated graduates is the consequence of institutional failure. The Nigerian government of all levels has failed in its contractual obligation to respect and sustain its social contract and promises with the people. There is a somewhat total collapse of social order, high rate of insecurity of lives and properties and prevalent abject poverty trend among the general rural population depict state failure. Secondly, the poor state of economic growth in the face of the growing population accounts

for the worsening and precarious unemployment scenario over the years. It shows that the government is not in perfect control of the situations in spite of its claim that it is on top of the whole situation. This is buttressed with the following illustration in figure 9:

Figure 9: Incidence of Unemployment in Nigeria, 2006 – 2011

Nigeria	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Population	140,431,790	144,925,607	149,563,227	154,349,250	159,288,426	164,385,656
Economically Active	78,922,666	81,448,191	84,054,533	86,744,278	89,520,095	92,384,738
Labour Force	57,455,701	59,294,283	61,191,700	63,149,835	65,170,629	67,256,090
Employed	50,388,650	51,763,909	52,074,137	50,709,317	51,224,115	51,181,884
Unemployed	7,067,051	7,530,374	9,117,563	12,440,517	13,946,515	16,074,205
Newly Unemployed		463,323	1,587,189	3,322,954	1,505,997	2,127,691

Source: National Bureau of Statistics: Annual Socio-Economic Report 2011

The table above indicates that the number of unemployed persons in 2006 was 7,067,051 as against a sharp increase to 16,074,205 in 2011; this figure excludes the newly unemployed persons which also stood at 2,127,691 as at 2011. Therefore, total number of unemployed persons in 2011 was 18,201,896. This portrays a picture of harder future time for the unemployed considering the fact that unemployment rate in 2012 (as shown in figure 7) was 24.30%.

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN, 2000) reports that for a period of 10 years (1991-2000), the GDP average growth rate was 2.8% while population growth rate was 2.57%. Therefore, with 2.57% average growth in population for 10 years, there is no way 2.86% economic growth for the same period will absorb the increase in labour supply. This unfavourable trend implies that on yearly basis, the absorptive capacity of the economy is very low to show any impressive result on employment. The population of high-level registered unemployed who eventually obtained placements reduced from 9.6% in 1990 to 0.10% in 2000 and later reduced to 0.11% in 2002. This corroborates the earlier deduction that the probability of Nigerian graduate being absorbed into the labour market is very low (Dabalén and Oni, 2000) cited in Federal Ministry of Youth Development Project, 2008. The data in the table below illustrates the situation on the registered unemployed up to 2004. Its current status has of course exacerbated the trend as unemployment rate is increasing astronomically.

Figure 10: Registered Unemployed, Vacancies Declared and Placements by Level of Workers

Year	Registered Unemployment		Vacancies Declared		Placements	
	Low Level	High Level	Low Level	High Level	Low Level	High Level
1970	11732	518	1533	80 (15.44%)	-	-
1975	23239	179	3989	172(96.09%)	-	-
1980	25662	-	34947	-	-	-
1985	96580	4165	11156	748(17.96%)	2139	145(3.48%)
1990	89752	10182	7637	3695(36.29%)	1917	986(9.68%)
1995	81730	32942	4182	3708(11.26%)	1119	49(0.15%)
2000	85368	104960	6583	115(0.10%)	923	110(0.10%)
2002	85648	94663	7010	121(0.13%)	1389	102(0.11%)
2004	290678	84731	2841	617(0.73%)	12113	510(0.60%)

Source: Central Bank of Nigeria Statistical Bulletin (2002); Federal Ministry of Employment, Labour and Productivity (2006)

NB: Figures in parenthesis represent percentages of registered unemployed.

Causes of Youth Unemployment in Nigeria

Unemployment rate, as observed in the analysis, is very high in spite of the favourable economic potentials for employment generation in the country, such as rapid increases in government revenues, windfalls from oil proceeds, and the appreciable rise on foreign reserves. Apart from the serious adverse effect of corruption on the economy, faulty and unfavourable economic policies of the government in the past three decades that have acted as disincentives to employment creation (such as high interest rate and exchange rate, poor infrastructures, import tariff, etc.) which have dwindled the employment absorptive capacity of the private sector; and non-investment of these resources in employment generation are responsible for sustaining youth unemployment in the Nigerian economy. Poor quality of education, lack of training and skill acquisition are negatively affecting the productive sector of the economy. Employers of labour, particularly the private-sector employers are not warmly disposed in giving Nigerian graduates job opportunities due to apparent poor outing which borders on the knowledge content which is a reflection of quality of their certificates. This is apparently the outcome of the weak public policy on education and the unfavourable policy environment for human resource development. The government is reluctant to invest heavily on education and encourage research institutions for result oriented research-projects.

There is absence of comprehensive population policies to control the population increase. There is no policy-thrust to encourage fertility reduction among the poor illiterate polygamous families in the rural areas and no effort is being made to curb the seemingly uncontrollable population explosion. This exacerbates the problems of youth unemployment as the rural-urban migration saturates the urban labour market which has already recorded its saturation limit. Such situation generates youth restiveness and possible resort to violent conflicts and other crimes. As the old saying goes, "Idle minds are the devil's workshop". The unemployed youths (educated and uneducated) are frustrated by the poor governance of the political class. It is the primary responsibility of all levels of government to harness and husband the state resources; and create

job opportunities for the teaming unemployed population, protect lives and properties and ensure good governance at all levels. Poverty is a disease and the youths are disposed to do anything possible to cure themselves of this ailment. Poverty is the product of unemployment; while youth violent conflicts has direct link to high rate of unemployment in Nigeria. Salawu (2010) observed that one of the major causes of ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria is the unfortunate breakdown of such indigenous vehicles of social control of human behaviours that characterized the traditional African societies, such as the family units, pre-school age indigenous education and native laws, religion and traditional political system that molds character, creates value to human life and care for the wellbeing of all citizens. The dysfunction of these traditional institutions has increased ethnic and communal violent conflicts and has seriously undermined the very essence and existence of state security agents in Nigeria. He linked failed state to mass poverty, illiteracy, and unemployment. Poverty and unemployment breed high rate of state insecurity which borders on ethno-religious conflicts, indigenes and settlers divide, armed robbery and other criminal activities in Nigeria. Poverty and unemployment have served as main ingredients to nursery bed (*breeding ground*) for numerous ethno-religious crisis in Nigeria. This is because the country has mighty reservoir of poverty-gripped people, who, out of frustration, are readily available war mongers, willing to serve as mercenary fighters. Poverty and unemployment inevitably increase the number of people who are prepared to kill or be killed for a given course at token benefit. This explains why all ethno-religious crises and indigenes/settlers conflicts that ever occurred in Nigeria have large followers (in terms of turnout of jobless people, including the under-aged in armed conflicts) as fighters, suicide bombers, and terrorists.

Unemployed Youths and Conflicts in Nigeria

Insecurity of lives and properties in Nigeria is being championed with ethnic bias by unemployed youths. Abundant supplies of valuable natural resources gives increased incentives to powerful elements of the society to seize areas or the entire state to control access to valuable resources. Such development generates civil strife. The disadvantaged segment of the society are invariably encouraged to form rebel groups and fight over abundant supplies of valuable natural resources. Thus, resource related conflict is driven by abundance and greed rather than scarcity and grievance. Unequal distributions of natural resources and unequal ability to purchase these resources, contribute to the scarcity experienced by disadvantaged segments of the population. Extreme poverty raises the likelihood of violent conflict and the collapse of a state into lawlessness (Kanbur, 2007; Kahl, n.d.). Over the past three decades, civil and ethnic conflicts have undermined prospects for economic and political development, destabilized the entire nation and left millions of defenseless civilians dead. State failure conflict occurs when population growth, environmental degradation and resource inequality weaken the capacity, legitimacy and cohesion of governments, thereby expanding the opportunities and incentives for rebellion and inter-group violent conflicts. State exploitation conflicts occur when political leaders themselves capitalize on the opportunities arising from population pressures, natural resource scarcities and related social grievances to instigate violence that serves their parochial interests. Demographically and environmentally induced conflicts are most likely to occur in countries that are deeply split along ethnic, religious, regional or class lines, and which have highly exclusive and discriminatory political system (Kahl, n.d.).

Relative deprivation is the experience of being deprived of economic benefits to which one thinks one is entitled. It is the conscious experience of a negative discrepancy between legitimate expectations and present realities. Relative economic marginalization refers to the discontent people feel when they compare their positions, what accrues to them economically to those similarly situated, and find that they have less than their peers. It is a condition that is measured by comparing one group's situation to the situations of those who are more advantaged. Relative economic deprivation is a potential cause of social movements and deviance, leading to extreme situations to political violence, such as rioting, terrorism and civil war or social deviance like crimes. In other words, social movements arise when people feel deprived of what they perceive as their fair share. Alienation, feelings of powerlessness, hopelessness and estrangement from society may predispose an individual or group of people to participate in the struggle against the state government. The groups or individuals who see themselves as permanently excluded from real power, despite apparent electoral resources, may become desperate, especially if the powers of government are used to disadvantage the aggrieved (Powell, 1992). In situations where feelings of frustration become widespread among the population, and the feeling is that people are getting less than they deserve, the most advisable thing for political leaders to do is to find out what the expectations of such individuals and groups are and to see ways of negotiating with them. Those in positions of authority believe that giving in to public demands or entering into negotiations is a sign of weakness (Faleti, 2006:48). Political and economic alienation reflect loss of faith in the political community and predisposes the individual to join a movement that challenges the authority perceived as being responsible for their woes. Where expectation does not meet attainment in comparison with other sections of the society, the general tendency is for the aggrieved people to confront those in government whom they hold responsible for frustrating their ambitions and aspirations as a people (Akpuru-Aja, 2007:32).

Poverty is a product of unemployment, inequality, economic marginalization, uneducated, etc. The jobless youths are frustrated due to inequality and economic deprivation that have rendered them unemployed. The Niger Delta youths, the Movement for Actualization of Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), the Oduduwa People's Congress (OPC), and the recent insurgence of the Boko Haram (a religious faceless sect without ideology) comprised young people without salary-earning jobs. The incidence of suicide bombing, terrorists' attacks, kidnapping, destruction of lives and properties, armed robbery, vandalization of corporate facilities, (such as the power holding installations and oil pipelines), car-snatching, drug abuse, and other criminal acts are unlawful activities associated with these groups. The purposeful engagement of the Niger Delta youths by the federal government through the Amnesty Programmes has stemmed the clandestine activities of the restive gangs in the region. The youths are currently gainfully engaged and there is relative peace in the area. The MASSOB and the Boko Haram groups are being brutally checkmated by the military and crime wave is in the increase in these areas. Military invasion of these turbulent regions is not the appropriate panacea to the precarious situations. Government should borrow a leaf from the expeditious mission in the Niger Delta region. Therefore, there is a direct relationship between unemployment, poverty and high rate of insecurity of lives and properties in Nigeria. Precisely stated, the analysis has shown that the increased wave of violence in Nigeria is as a result of unemployment and poverty.

CONCLUSION

The inbred of youth restiveness has been linked to ineptitude of the unemployed persons and under utilization of the unemployed university graduates in the labour market. There is need for a radical reform in the areas of skill acquisition centres to engage the jobless youths to learning trades that would equip them to be self-employed and employers of labour. Revitalization of agricultural development schemes and reintroduction of school to farm scheme to create job opportunities for the army of unemployed youths who are currently economically wasteful in the labour market. Aggressive favourable agrarian policies capable of equipping participants with the necessary knowledge and government's willingness and readiness to sponsor beneficiaries of the programmes to establish farm-business ventures and small scale industries of their own after the training, is recommended to reduce poverty trend, unemployment rate and insecurity of lives and properties in Nigeria. It will also bring about peace and harmonious co-existence in all parts of the country.

Government's embarkation on peace building mechanisms to curb these social ills and repositioning of the drifting nation to a more purposeful track is very necessary now than ever. This would be achieved through embracing and readmitting the derailed persons back into the society. Settlement of all members of these restive groups in rehabilitation centres across the country will re-orientate their psyche, a reformation process that would bring forth a new dawn of socio-political stability to the country. These repentant elements would be drafted into the farm land to produce food to feed the nation. This exercise will also create job opportunities for young school leavers. This u-turn for a purposeful generation will afford government opportunity to focus more on stable economic and political development projects. These proposals, if utilized, will yield best results than the coercive application of barrel of gun as a problem-solving mechanism. Matching force with force is not the best solution to the precarious situation in the country. The plausible explanation to solving the problem is dialogue and action-packed approach to engage the youths to living wage jobs.

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