

# Unemployment in the Nigerian Democratic Setting: Challenges and the Way Forward

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## ABSTRACT

*The economic situations of Nigeria have placed only a few as beneficiaries of the abundant resources of the country, leaving behind so many others living below the poverty line. This has posed a serious threat to national development. Due to this poor economic trend, married people are advised to give birth only to the number of children they can cater for both morally and financially. This study is therefore a review of the challenges of unemployment in the Nigerian democratic setting -the way forward. This study revealed that corruption is the challenging and disturbing thing that has made democracy in Nigeria not to yield the desire dividend as expected. Poor birth control which increases the rate of unemployment in the country was also identified as one of the democratic problems stirring Nigeria in the face. Hence, Nigerian government should borrow a leaf from countries like China and India where there is strict adherence to child birth control policies. Besides, in order to restore sanity into a democratic system, corruption should be totally eliminated to forestall peace and progress in the nation so as to make her citizens have assured Faith in democratic governance.*

**Keywords:** *Unemployment, democracy, birth control, economy*

## INTRODUCTION

From historical perspective democracy in a developing country like Nigeria became fully reckoned with when she became a federal republic in 1963, though it was truncated by a military *coup d'etat* on 15th January, 1966. The second republic started in 1979 which Alhaji Shehu Shagari became the first democratic elected president. His regime was halted with military rule in 1983. The third republic started in 1999 and was stopped on 12th June, 1993. Democracy was restored back to Nigeria on 29th May, 1999. (Department of Defense Dictionary 2005). The outburst of democracy brought in President Olusegun Obasanjo, whose dispensation restored a lasting democracy in the country thereby creating a great awareness whereby people now see the need to allow democracy to prevail as evidence by fundamental human rights, which led to peace and unity among all citizens. As part of the dividends of democracy, one should expect a better way of life by being gainfully employed by either private or public sector or create an enabling environment

for self-employment so as to do away with the menace called unemployment because, it has the capacity of rendering a person or community. Unemployment creates room for hoodlums to manipulate, introducing hunger into the young generations who have little or no understanding of the real situation and may easily be derailed into crimes in an attempt to find a solution to an already existing problem of unemployment. Two wrongs do not make any rights at all, but what we have all around us are so many wrongs with the intention of correcting already existing wrongs. The possibility of arriving at a way out of these problems, is the main focus of this study. It is expected to bring out possible problems and proffer likely solution as a means to ending these abnormalities called unemployment that has eating deep into our young and promising democracy. The proliferation of public and private schools that have helped the country to produce enough graduates are not to be blamed, since it plays a major part in the economic development of a country with positive thinking. Efforts should be made to ensure that the good gesture is reciprocated by providing befitting permanent and pensionable jobs. Some ugly situations have presented themselves in Nigeria whereby graduates have been employed as part-time workers. This means that there are no permanent jobs for citizens, so how do we even help other countries with similar problems of unemployment.

For instance, in a situation whereby five job vacancies exist, requiring five people and the requirement for employment among others is second class lower (2-2). If an advertisement is placed and about two thousand people apply with different classes of Degrees like distinction, second class upper and second class lower. Merit will not be considered at all. In Nigeria, one would not be surprised to know that Godfatherism will be the yardstick to determine those who will eventually be employed. Godfatherism is a very serious disease that has to be quickly destroyed, since it has the power to lead an economy to total extinction as people who are not qualified will be given preference over the qualified ones. This will make the brilliant graduates to be unemployed and be roaming the street with their knowledge. If eventually they get involved in crimes; it will be a well organized crime and will only need a perfect means to have a better solution.

As a matter of fact, this topic was necessitated by uncontrollable series of challenging problems of insecurity in the country. One could imagine why children within ages 10 to 15 years could be maneuvered into a very serious crime as to hold Guns to terminate lives that can only be created by God. Unemployment could be held responsible in one way or another. These scenario scares researchers terribly into an alarming state of mind such that we are always restless and aware of people who are equally not at peace on this issue. A way out has to be created so as to keep everyone in a relaxed state of mind which will be the source of progress in our families, societies and the Nation at large. The study is meant to address issue of unemployment, so as to control or totally stop the increasing rate of crime in the country. This research work is also meant to offer a better way of life to Nigerians, so that, no influence whatsoever can derail one to have a change of focus in the God given direction thereby reaping the benefits of a good democratic governance. The study is limited to Nigeria as most problems now occur around densely populated areas where we have joblessness at the highest order and there is also no concrete source of income or having a feeling of rejection by the government at all levels.

## **UNEMPLOYMENT AND DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA**

The role of youth unemployment is alarming particularly in the face of the current global economic crises. However youth unemployment is not a recent phenomenon in Nigeria, given the fact that at the period of economic boom (1970), the country recorded 6.2% level of unemployment among youths. Also, the level of youth unemployment rose to 9.8% and 11.5% in the 80s and 90s respectively (Wogu, 2012). However the rising youth unemployment rate has become a major concern to all Nigerians in view of the dangerous signals it sends to all segments of the society. Current figures from the bureau of statistics put the current youth unemployment rate at over 25%. The implication is that over 60 million Nigerian youths out of a population of 150 million are unemployed, a situation that is threatening the very existence of Nigeria as a Nation.

Global economy is been threatened by the challenges of creating productive jobs in a bid to sustain economic growth and maintain social cohesion. International Labour Organisation (ILO) launched its 2012 global employment trend which indicated that lack of structural transformation and high population growth has limited the opportunities for decent jobs in Africa. The ILO warns that the world faces additional challenge of creating decent job for the estimated 900 million workers living with their families below the \$2 a day poverty line, mostly in developing countries. This report discloses that 74.8 million youths aged 15-24 years were unemployed in 2011, an increase of more than 4 million since 2007. It added that globally, young people are nearly three times as adult to be unemployed, noting that the global youth unemployment rate of 12.7% remains a full percentage point above crises level. With these phenomenon, the ILO at the just concluded International Labour Conference (ILC) said it has become imperative for world leaders to make youth employment their priority in governance.

Ikpi (1997) defines governance as the total ability to organize, synthesize and direct the various actions of the working part of government to perform meaningfully, credibly, and acceptably. This means that governance involves both the governing class and the governed people. Akpotor (2001) argues that governance clearly covers all aspect of the complex and myriad relationship that exist between the government and the governed. He went further to explain that the extent to which peoples' affairs are managed depends on the class of people in power, thus, governance could be good or bad. According to Akpotor (2001), democratic governance is a normative judgement which indicates a preferred relation that would ideally laid between state and society and between government and the people. It incorporate accountability based on the notion of popular sovereignty and public choice, a legal framework that guarantees the rule of law and due process, popular participation in decision making process based on political and social pluralism. Ikpi (1997) is of the view that democratic governance can be examined from six perspectives namely:

- i) The establishment and development of a free market economy
- ii) The initiation and maintenance of rapid socio-economic growth
- iii) The establishment of a basic organizational framework to act as a spring board for further development.

- iv) The creation of an absorptive capacity for capital and other inputs.
- iv) The organisation and promotion of private sector investment and
- v) The raising of the productivity of the people by improving their skills, enterprise, initiative, adaptability and attitudes.

For this principle to be relevant, it is important to observe that governance consist of two distinct but intimately intertwined dimensions, The first is political and relates to commitment to good service and the other is technical and relates to issues of efficiency and public management. It should be noted that without political commitment, little can be achieved. Even with an efficient public administration, no government can be effective no matter how benevolent, thus, performance of government depends on the role assigned to the state, the competence of the public agency and the extent to which there is an enabling environment that facilitates and encourages growth promoting activities by private citizens and honest behaviour by public officials (Ayanwu, 1998). Though Nigeria is claiming to practice federalism, it is only in principle and not in practice. The federal government has appropriated more powers to itself than it can cope with. With about 52% allocation in government structure of Federal, State and Local Government are at a disadvantage. The federal government is leaving the state with lesser fund for projects. It is evident that Africa is the poorest continent in the world and the present situation shows backward movement in terms of infrastructure provision especially, the technology based. It has now become clear even to obstinate and recalcitrant policy makers that unless drastic measures are taken, living conditions for most people in this continent will continue to fall (Elu, 2000).

There are many theories of development; they are classified into modernization and dependency. The modernization theorists base their argument on economic psychology and diffusion. The economic approach, Rostow (1962) identifies five stages in the process of economic development. Rostows postulation is that underdevelopment was an original position from which traditional societies could move through stages to development without recourse to social revolution. Everest (1983) explains development in terms of presence (or absence) of some individual personality trait or the general psychological state characterizing a society. McClelland (1968) argues that the need for achievement encourages the individual to meet challenges to take risk and to succeed in the face of difficulties. Western industrialized nations contained individuals with high level of achievement and motivation which led to high rate of national growth. Hagen (1983) argues that traditional developing nations produces authoritarian personalities who lack self confidence, exhibit a high level of anxiety when faced with new situation and who are always content to preserve the status quo. Developed societies have more innovative personalities who display self confidence, derive satisfaction in solving problems and who are achievers. He argued further that for development to occur, individual personalities have to change. More innovative personalities could be encouraged in improving literacy, expanding the mass media, urbanizing and promoting nationalism. Eragha (2000) and Edari (1976) utilize diffusion theory to explain the process of less privilege society's development. Diffusion in this context is a process by which a third world country adopts capital, technology and social structure from western industrialized countries. Eragha (2000) and Edari (1976)

argue that the developing countries would develop to the extent that Western industrialized countries provide capital programmes. They adopt modern method of Agriculture and industrial production and they adopt those values, attitudes and behavioural patterns that are exhibited by western industrialized nations. The people centered approach to development views an individual not as a subject but as an actor who defines the goal, controls the resources and directs processes affecting his or her life (Korten and Klaus, 1984). The key elements in this approach are provision of infrastructure through empowerment of people development of an administrative process which respond to the need of the people, human growth and wellbeing, equality, self reliance, participation and sustainability. An infrastructure development programme can be sustained by creating a felt need among beneficiaries about the efficacy of the programme, development which continually adopt providing (or self generating) sources and building support among political elite and community group.

Modernization theories provoked a great deal of criticism from radical scholars like Andre, Gunder Frank, Cloude Ake, Bode Onimode, Segun Osoba, Swingina Silas and Others, who argued that colonialism and western capitalism were the two major factors responsible for the underdeveloped nature of third world countries. The western industrialized countries develop by exploiting human and natural resources of their colonies and by making them economically dependent on their colonial powers after independence. However, since the demise of the colonialist, African ought to have found their feet. One disturbing and challenging reason why democracy has refused to provide the expected benefit is corruption. Corruption does not only raise the price of infrastructure facilities, but can also reduce the quality of and economic returns from infrastructure investment. Corruption in Nigeria is very high and unbearable for any infrastructure development and consequently democratic growth.

The bureau of public procurement (BPP), the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offense Commission (ICPC), and Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC), have not been able to eradicate corruption in the country. BPP has been able to save a whopping sum of 216.6billion during the 2010 appropriation year (Wogu, 2012) from its review of contract process before the issuance of certificate of NO OBJECTION. Democracy requires compromise. Groups with different interest and opinion must be willing to sit down with one another and negotiate. In a democracy, one group does not always win everything it wants. Different combination of groups win on different issues, everyone should win something. If one group is always excluded and fails to be heard, it may turn against democracy in anger and frustration. Everyone who is willing to participate peacefully and respect the rights of others should have a say in the way the country is governed (Ukpong, 2011). Various forms of unemployment have been identified and elaborated upon in this work. These include seasonal, frictional, cyclical, and structural unemployment (Adebayo, 1999; Damachi, 2001 and Todaro, 1992). Unemployment is measured among people in the labour force (Obadan and Odusola 2001 as cited in National Bureau of Statistics 2010). The labour force of a country as defined by National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) (2009) is a set of people or citizens of a country who are willing and are

able to make available at any given point in time their effort for gainful employment. The unemployed are the individuals with no work, but are looking for work at the time of any study. Unemployment is a global trend but it occurs more in a developing countries of the world with attendant social, economical, political and psychological consequences. Thus, massive youth unemployment in any country is an indication of far more complex problems.

The ILO (2007) report has shown that the proportion of world unemployment are steadily increasing and that the number of those without jobs remained at all time of more than 195 million or 6.3% in 2007 for instance, during that period, the middle east and North Africa were the regions with the highest unemployment rate in the world at 12.2%, followed by sub Saharan Africa at nearly 10%. East Asia unemployment rate of 3.6% remained the lowest. The report affirms that the population growth, especially in south Asia, the Middle East, North Africa and sub Saharan Africa was putting a lot of pressure on job creation. The report concluded that half of all workers in the world - some 1.4billion working lived in families that survived on less than US\$2 a day per person. These people worked in vast informal sector-from farms to fishing, from Agriculture to urban alleyways-without benefits, social security or healthcare. Some 550million working poor lived on US\$1 or less per day. In absolute terms, it is estimated that there are about 122million youths in Africa (Echebiri, 2005; Chigunta, 2003). Therefore, projections of the population growth rate into the 21st century indicated that the proportion of youth in relation to the overall population will continue to grow. Todaro (1992) points out that the high rate of unemployment is as a result of continuous transfer of economic activities especially the youth from rural to urban areas.

### **YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT SITUATION IN NIGERIA**

According to Oyebade (2003), Nigeria's unemployment is grouped into two categories; first the older unemployed who lost their jobs through retrenchment, redundancy or bankruptcy; and the second, the younger unemployed, most of whom have never been employed. According to Awogbenle and Iwuamadi (2010), the statistics from the manpower board and the federal bureau of statistics showed that Nigeria has a youth population of 80million, representing 60% of the total population of the country. Also, 64million of them are unemployed, while 1.6million are underemployed. The 1990-2000 data on youth unemployment showed that the largest group of the unemployed is the secondary school graduates. Also 40% of the unemployment rate is among the urban youths aged 20-24 and 31% of the rate is among those aged 15-19. Thus two third [2/3] of the urban unemployed are ranged from 15-24 years old. Moreover, the educated unemployed tended to be young males with few dependants. There are relatively few secondary school graduates and the lowered job expectations of primary school graduates. The above analysis indicates that there is no consistent trend of unemployment in Nigeria. An increase in one or two years is sometimes followed by a decline in the subsequent years. According to National Bureau of Statistics (2009 and 2010), the National employment rate for Nigeria between 2000 and 2009 showed that the number of unemployed persons constituted 31.1% in 2000, 13.6% in 2001, 12.6% in 2002, 14.8% in 2003; 13.4% in 2004; 11.9% in 2005;

13.7% in 2006; 14.6% in 2007; 14.9% in 2008; and 19.7% in 2009. Specifically as regards the age group, educational group and sex, data provided by National Bureau of Statistics (2010) further showed that as at March 2009 in Nigeria, for persons between ages of 15 and 24 years, 4.6% were unemployed in Nigeria. Furthermore, for those with post secondary education 21.3% were unemployed. For those who never attended school and those with below primary education 21.0% and 22.3% were unemployed respectively. As regards sex, data showed that males constitute 17.0% while females constitute 23.3%. It is important to note that the figures above may not have captured in totality the youth unemployment situation in Nigeria, however, they are pointing to the fact that the phenomenon is very critical with far reaching implications on the stability of democracy.

### **CAUSES OF YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT**

In the study of unemployment in Nigeria, Adebayo (1999), Alanana (2003), Awogbenle and Iwuamadi (2010), Echebiri (2005) have identified the main causes of youth unemployment in Nigeria. The first is the rapid growing urban force arising from rural migration. Rural-urban migration is usually explained in terms of push-pull factors. The push factors include the pressure resulting from man-land ratio in the rural areas and the existence of serious underemployment arising from the seasonal, cycle of climate. The factors are further increased in Nigeria by lack of infrastructure facilities which makes the rural life unattractive. Migration to urban areas is always accompanied with the probability of securing lucrative employment in the industries. In addition to this, there is the concentration of social amenities in the urban areas. This meant that the rural areas are exempted in the allocation of social and economic opportunities.

According to Sarr (2000), youth migrants in Africa are three times more in number than other migrants. Urbanization rate of youth was 32% in 1990, compared to the less than 25% for the non youth population. He estimated that by the end of 2010, over 50% of youth in Africa will be residing in urban areas where job opportunities are limited to a few modern sector and establishments. The second is the rapid growth. Going by the 2006 census in Nigeria, the Nations population was put at 140,431,790 and projection for the future indicates that the population could be over 180million by the year 2020, given the annual growth rate of 3.2% (National Population Commission and LCF Macro, 2009). With this population, Nigerian is the most populated Nation in Africa. It is argued that, the high population growth rate has resulted in the rapid growth of the labour force, which is far outstripping the supply of job.

The accelerated growth of population on Nigeria's unemployment problem is multifaceted. It affects the supply side through high and rapid increase in labour force relative to the absorptive capacity of the economy. The third is the outdated school curricula and lack of employable skills. Some scholars and commentators argued that as far as the formal sector is concerned, the average Nigerian graduate is not employable therefore does not possess the skills needed by employers of labour for a formal employment. Often, this is attributed to the Nigeria education system with its liberal bias. The course contents of most tertiary institutions in Nigeria lacks entrepreneurial contents that would

have enabled graduates to become job creators rather than job seekers. The fourth is the rapid expansion of educational system which directly leads to increase in supply of educational manpower above the corresponding demand for them. This contributes to the problem of youth unemployment in Nigeria.

According to Manning and Junankar (1998), the total number of graduates produced by the higher institutions in Nigeria, which were 73,339 in 1986/1987 and rose to 131,016 in 1996/1997. Presently with over 97 Universities in Nigeria (both Federal, State, and Private) and the increasing demand for higher education, there has been the problem of suitable employment for the variety of graduates that are produced by these higher institutions every year. Ordinarily, this should not have been a problem but the reality is that, Nigeria is too weak to accommodate this number of graduates (Utomi, 2011). Furthermore, there is no vibrant manufacturing sector which has the capacity to absorb unemployed youths in Nigeria. There are over 800 collapsed industries in Nigeria and over 37 factories have closed up in 2009. About half of the remaining operating firms have been classified as 'ailing', a situation that poses a great threat to the survival of manufacturing in the country in the next few years. According to the survey carried out as part of its membership operational audit 1st January 2010 by Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (M.A.N), the 834 figure represents the cumulative aggregate of firms that have shut down their operations in 2009 across the country.

M.A.N's survey usually covers five manufacturing areas into which the country is divided in terms of manufacturing activities. These includes Lagos, North, Southeast and Southwest areas. The report of the survey showed that in 2009, a total number of 179 firms became terminally sick and collapsed in the Northern areas comprising of Kano and Kaduna States manufacturing axis. In the southeast area, which comprised of Anambra, Enugu, Imo and Abia States, a total number of 178 companies wound up during the period. While in the south-south area which consist of Rivers, Cross River and Akwa Ibom States, 46 companies shut down operation before December 2009. The south-west area which comprise of Oyo, Osun, Ogun, Ondo, Ekiti, Kogi and Kwara States, lost 225 companies during the year 2009. It said, the Lagos area, covering Ikeja, Apapa, Ikorodu and other industrial divisions, in the State, followed closely with 214 manufacturing companies wound up before end of 2009 (Okafor, 2005; Opara, 2011; Usman, 2011).

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Democracy is a process and not a destination. Even though it may not be perfect, it is expected that a lot of advantages that people could benefit from should be visible. With the way it is been run in Nigeria, only a few are benefiting, leaving behind so many others, that may pose a very serious threat to the growth of a nation. Hence, as a way to find a lasting solution to the increasing growth rate of any nation, Nigeria should borrow a leaf from countries like China and India where there is strict adherence to birth control policies to checkmate the production of children that can not be fully catered for morally and financially. Nigerians should strictly adhere to the constitution that governs her people so as to



implement any policy initiative with its aims and objectives which will help actualize the dream of introducing such policy. Government should create other ministries like, Ministry of Desert Encroachment at Federal, State and Local government levels to provide job opportunities to youths that are roaming the streets. Federal government should rehabilitate the railway lines across the nation thereby absorbing the unemployed youths especially the secondary and primary school graduates. Conditions for proliferation of Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education should be made stringent in such a way that, only qualified graduates can be produced to boost the nation's economy. Medium and small scale jobs should be provided by both public and private sectors to take care of graduates from secondary and primary schools respectively. In order to restore sanity into a democratic system, corruption should be totally eliminated to forestall unity, peace and progress in the nation, so as to make her citizens have assured faith in democratic governance.

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