

Democratic Governance and Youth Unemployment in Nigeria (2015 - 2019)

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Abstract: *Democracy and unemployment among youth are two antithetical bed-fellows. Any nation's democratic development is hampered by unemployment. For a democratic experiment to succeed, the young, lively, and enthusiastic are valuable resources that shouldn't be underutilized. Thus, the youth unemployment has been the bane of Nigeria's democracy since inception in 1999. Hence, becomes a cog in the wheel of democratic processes where it manifests itself in myriads of serious socioeconomic and political crises such as kidnappings, prostitution and insurgency among others. The method of study was the secondary method. Based on the findings, the research recommended among other things that government should formulate and effectively implement proper policy measures that will drastically reduce the country's youth unemployment rate.*

Keywords: Democracy, Governance, Youth, Unemployment, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Unemployment is one of the developmental problems currently facing all developing economies of the world (Patterson et al, 2006), and Nigeria is not an exception. If a person has actively sought employment within the last five weeks and still does not have a job, they are considered to be unemployed or jobless (International Labour Organization, 1982; Fajana, 2000). It is a result of their being an excess of labour supply compared to demand. The number of jobless people is divided by the total number of people who are now employed to get at the unemployment rate, which is a measure of how prevalent unemployment is. The level of poverty would increase in an economy with a higher unemployment rate and associated welfare challenges (Emeh et al., 2012).

Two groups of jobless people have been identified: the older unemployed, who lost their jobs due to layoffs, redundancies, or insolvency; and the younger unemployed, who, for the most part, have never held a job (Oyebade, 2003). Although unemployment affects people of all socioeconomic classes, this study's main focus is on youth because they have been disproportionately affected.

Unemployment is a problem around the world, but it is worse in emerging nations and has negative social, economic, political, and psychological repercussions. It results in increased crime and violence, psychological effects, detrimental effects on health, and political instability in addition to contributing to poor GDP (Njoku and Ihugba, 2011). Nigeria has long struggled with unemployment; the country's jobless rate increased from 4.3% in 1970 to 6.4% in 1980. This fluctuated around 6.0 per cent until 1987 when it rose to 7.0 per cent (CBN, 2003; Akintoye, 2003). The Federal Government of Nigeria implemented the Structural Adjustment Programme in 1986 to address the issue of unemployment. This was somewhat successful because the unemployment rate dropped from 7.0% in 1987 to 1.9% in 1995. After that, it increased to 2.8% in 1996 and has continued to decline ever since, fluctuating between 2.8% and 13.1% between 1996 and 2000 (Njoku and Ihugba, 2011). However, youth unemployment in Nigeria is currently three times higher than overall unemployment, expanding at a rate of 16% yearly (Doreo, 2013).

In 2002-2003, Sub-Saharan Africa's youth population was estimated to be 138 million, with 28.9 million (21%) of them unemployed (ILO, 2004). Furthermore, it has been noted that youth unemployment in Africa has a geographical component, with metropolitan areas typically seeing greater rates of youth unemployment than rural ones (Nwanguma, et al., 2012). With nearly half (51%) of its population unemployed, Namibia has the highest unemployment rate in Africa, if not the entire world, whereas South Africa has one of the worst rates of unemployment on the continent at 25% (Adesina, 2013). Given that it is a social issue that affects all emerging nations, the globe is not just about Nigeria and Africa that are experiencing rising unemployment. It now poses a serious problem in the majority of countries around the world, however in rich nations it has a bit more stability than in most emerging nations, where it tends to rise steadily.

For instance, the unemployment rate in the United States rose from 5% in 2007 to 9% in 2011. Due to the European debt crisis, Spain's has increased from 8.6% to 21.52 percent, the UK's has increased from 5.3 to 8.1 percent, and Greece's has increased from 8.07 to 18.4% over the same period (Vanguard, 2012). But the common rate of unemployment in emerging nations, particularly in Africa, is typically very high. For instance, while not the highest rates on the Continent, the unemployment rates in Botswana, Angola, and Kenya are respectively 17.5, 25.8, and 11.7% (Allawadi, 2010).

According to the nation's unemployment statistics, about 38 million Nigerians are without jobs representing 23.9% of the entire population. Additionally, the study by educational status indicates that those with only a basic education in Nigeria have been the ones most severely impacted by unemployment. For instance, in 1974 and 1978, respectively, 76.8 and 80.6% of the unemployed were people with only primary school education.

However, the problem has recently gotten worse due to the rising unemployment rate among professionals like accountants and engineers, among others. Akintoye (2003) conducted a recent study that found that graduate unemployment increased from less than 1% of the unemployed in 1974 to 4% in urban areas and 2.2 percent in rural regions by 1984. According to a National Bureau

of Statistics (2011) poll, there were 1.8 million new workers entering the labor market per year from 2006 until 2011. As of 2013, even the states listed below had substantial overall unemployment rates that were higher than the national average of 23.9 percent: Katsina (37.3%), Bauchi (37.2%), Bayelsa (38.4%), Akwa-Ibom (34.1%), Gombe (32.1%), Adamawa (29.4%), Borno (27.7%), Kano (27.6%), Yobe (27.3%), Taraba (26.8%), Jigawa (26.5%), Imo (20.8%), FCT (21.5%), while Plateau obtained the lowest figure of 7.1% (Salami, 2013).

The recent Nigerian Immigration Test, which was held on Saturday, March 15, 2014 but later went bad, served as justification for how widespread youth unemployment is in Nigeria. About 20 applicants lost their lives and many were injured in stampedes that occurred at five of the six stadiums utilized nationwide for the aptitude test. Eight applicants at the National Stadium Abuja, five at the Liberation Stadium Port Harcourt, three in Ibadan, one in Benin, and three in Minna were presumed dead during the stampedes (Vanguard Newspaper, March 16th, 2014; This Day Newspaper, March 16th, 2014). With only 4,500 openings in the Nigerian Immigration Service, almost 125,000 applicants traveled to the Abuja National Stadium alone to take the test, filling a 60,000-seat stadium.

Without any sort of crowd control plan in place, 125,000 anxious applicants filled a stadium that could hold 60,000 people, which led to a tragic stampede. Although no lives were lost, hundreds of certificates are said to have been lost during stampedes that were also recorded in Akure, the capital of the Ondo State. The Port Harcourt Liberation Stadium can hold 16,000 people, yet 23,000 people showed up to take the test there. A \$1000 application fee was reportedly paid to each candidate, making the test's organizers overnight millionaires at the expense of the unemployed. This is an accurate representation of Nigeria's pervasive young unemployment.

According to research, Lagos and Kano have Nigeria's highest rates of youth unemployment. Among the approximately 3,334,139 Nigerian youths who are currently unemployed, Kano State leads the pack with 369,139 unemployed people, followed by Lagos with 353,097, both of which constitute 22% of the national total (Amusan, 2007). This is due to the fact that recent graduates from Nigeria flock to Lagos State in pursuit of white-collar work. They believe that because Lagos State was once the Federal Capital and a Center of Excellence, it offers more career prospects than other states, making a trip to Lagos for greener pastures necessary. The unemployment rate and its impacts on the position are of course, in an extremely horrible situation as a result of this surge.

In Nigeria, there is no social security system in place to support the unemployed, in contrast to what is the case in the majority of affluent nations. Therefore, the majority, if not all, of the unemployed are unable to fend for themselves because they do not receive unemployment benefits from the government. Thus, many people have turned to participating in actions that pose a security risk. These security-threatening activities, which are widespread in Nigeria, include political thuggery, armed robbery, neighborhood boys, pipeline vandalism, oil bunkering, prostitution, etc. rather than serving as catalysts for development and change, they become a burden on society. After years of unemployment and dissatisfaction, several of them take part in these illicit activities because they appear to be the most alluring possibilities for them. In Nigeria, universities and other tertiary institutions turn out 120,000 graduates year on average, but 500,000 school-leavers or college graduates leave each year with no prospect of employment (NAPEP, 2003). Okafor (2011) asserts that the plague of unemployment in Nigeria is exacerbated by the ever-expanding educational expansion and the youths' urgent need to pursue a university degree, regardless of the courses and course materials. As a result, many abilities learned at the university seem outdated and dysfunctional. This has raised new concerns about the caliber of Nigerian graduates.

Youth are the greatest assets any country can have (Zango, 2015), and when they are completely positive engaged, they contribute significantly to a democratic system. Thus, youth unemployment hinders the progress of and development of a nation as well as becoming a source of devastating social tension and conflict. The youths are young, energetic, vibrant and an important resource that should not be left idle especially in a democratic setting. As Zango (2015) simply put, youth, as a social group, make up a significant share of the Nigerian population, accounting for about constituting 53,552,331 amounting to about 38.1%. In accordance with the Nigerian Youth Policy, youth are defined to be a group of individuals aged between 15-35 years.

According to Ojo (1998), the unemployment issue in Nigeria started to become a problem around the 1960s because it was so minimal in the 1950s. This is due to the fact that 143,000 youngsters who were not yet of legal working age were over-employed as per the 1952-1953 population census (Diejomah and Orimalade, 1971). In accordance with the CBN report (2003), the country's unemployment rate increased to 4.3% in the 1970 and 6.4% in 1980. The high rate of unemployment observed in the 1980s was largely linked to the depression in the Nigerian economy during the late 70s. Ojo (1998) attributed the low unemployment rate of 4.3% in 1976 to the decade's oil boom. Secondly, the unemployment rate was relatively high overall in addition in urban and rural areas during the second half of 1980. This was a result of the economy's deteriorating condition after the oil boom and the 1986 adoption of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP). Thirdly, unemployment rate have always been higher in urban areas due to rural urban migration.

According to Labour Force Survey conducted by the Federal Office of Statistics in December 1997, Nigeria has a composite unemployment rate which stood at 3.2% compared with 3.4% in the corresponding period of 1996 (F.O.S, 2001). Similarly, the urban and rural unemployment rates declined from 6.1% and 2.8% in December 1996 to 6.0% and 2.6% in December 1997. While the urban unemployment rate was 4.9% in December 1998 but increased to 2.5% in December 1999, the composite registered unemployment rate for December 1998 was 3.2% but fell to 3.1% in 1999. In December 2000, the composite unemployment rate increased to 4.7% similarly the urban and rural unemployment rates increased to 7.2% compared to the previous years. However,

Nigerian unemployment rate increased to 23.9% in 2011 compared with 21.1% in 2010 (NBS, 2011). It is therefore interesting to note that the NBS (2011) reported that the rate of unemployment is higher in the urban areas with 26.6% as against that of rural areas which indicated only 17.1%. One of the factors contributing to unemployment as argued by Fadayomi (1992) was the inability to grow and utilize the nation's manpower resources effectively, particularly in rural area. This however, brought about high rate of urbanization and an increasing number of youth migrating to cities seeking to get greener pastures thereby leaving agriculture to the aged (Usoro, 1997).

Government and policy experts are finding it more and more challenging to address youth unemployment effectively. A high unemployment rate can be attributed to a variety of factors, including inadequate job creation provisions in development plans, excessive educational growth, and youths' desperation to enroll in university education regardless of the courses and course materials. Due to this, many university-acquired skills seem inefficient and irrelevant (Celine, 1999). The socioeconomic effects of unemployment include a decline in national productivity, an uptick in rural-to-urban migration, the waste of human resources, a high dependency ratio, poverty, and all manner of immoral and criminal behaviour, including robbery, etc. All of these falls under the category of little or no economic growth, and the social impact of unemployment highlights the need for solutions to help save Nigeria.

It is against these backgrounds that the research examined democratic governance and youth unemployment in Nigeria (2015 - 2019).

CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

The Concept of Democracy

Different definitions of democracy have been advanced by several scholars. In its simplest term, democracy is a means for the people to choose their leaders and to hold their leaders accountable for their policies and their conduct in office. The electorate chooses who will lead the national and local governments as well as represent them in parliament. They choose between opposing parties in regularly scheduled elections that are also free and fair.

The rule-making body's approval is the foundation of government. The people are sovereign in a democracy, which means they have the highest level of political power. The government's leaders receive authority from the people, but they only have it for a limited time. While majority approval is required for laws and programmes in parliament, minority' rights are safeguarded in a number of different ways. People have the right to express their disapproval of the elected officials who represent them and to scrutinize how they carry out their duties. National and local elected representatives are expected to listen to the people and respond to their needs and suggestions (Gilley, 2009; Plattner, 2010).

In democracy, elections have to occur at regular intervals, as prescribed by law. Those in power cannot extend their terms without seeking the people's approval again in an election. For elections to be free, fair, transparent and credible, they have to be conducted by a neutral, fair, and independent body that treats all political parties and candidates equally. All parties and candidates must be free to campaign and present their manifestos to voters both directly and through the media. It is necessary for voters to vote in secret, without fear of intimidation or violence. Independent observers should be able to be able to watch the voting and the tallying of the votes to make sure that there was no fraud, intimidation, or corruption during the process. Also, many disagreements over the election results must be resolved by an impartial and independent tribunal. Any country can hold an election in a democracy, but for the election to be free and fair, political parties, electoral officials, and civil society organizations that monitor the process must work together to organize, prepare, and train (Rose and Munro, 2003; Lipset, 2011).

Moreover, in democracy, people have an obligation to become informed about public issues, to watch carefully how their political leaders and representatives use their powers, and to express their own opinions and interests. Another crucial civic obligation of all citizens is to vote in elections. To cast an informed vote, however, each citizen should pay attention to perspectives of the various political parties and candidates before making his or her own choice of who to support. Participation can also include campaigning for a political party or candidate, running for political office, debating public issues, reaching out to community members, submitting a petition to the government, as well as engaging peaceful protests (Levitsky and Way, 2010; Ogunidiya, 2010).

Furthermore, engagement is vitally facilitated by active participation in independent, non-governmental organizations, called "civil society". These organizations may represent different interests and viewpoints including but not limited to farmers, workers, doctors, teachers, business owners, religious organizations, women, students, and human rights activists are all represented. It is critical that women participate fully in both politics and civil society. The majority of civil society organizations educate people about their democratic rights and responsibilities, as well as how to improve their political skills, represent their common interests, and participate in political life. Civic group membership is voluntary in a democracy.

Nobody is being compelled to join a group that is hostile to them. Also, Political parties are important organizations in a democracy, and democracy grows stronger when citizens participate in political parties. However, nobody is being threatened or under any pressure to join or support any political party. As a result, everyone has the right to support whichever party they want. Democracy depends largely on people's participation. However, participation must be peaceful, law-abiding, and accepting of the diverse viewpoints of other groups and individuals (Ake, 1996; Toyo, 1994; Ukpung, 2011).

One of the cardinal elements of democracy is the rule of law. By extension therefore, democracy is a form of government where laws, not people, reign. The rule of law protects citizens' rights, maintains order, and limits government power in a democracy.

Under the law, everyone is equal. No one may face discrimination because of their race, religion, ethnic group, or gender. No one may be arbitrarily arrested, imprisoned, or exiled. If a person is detained, he or she has the right to know the charges against him or her, as well as the right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty under the law. Everyone facing criminal charges is entitled to a fair, expeditious, and public trial before an impartial court. No one may be prosecuted unless a law has been established in advance. No one, not even elected or appointed state officials, is above the law. Independent of the other branches of government, courts enforce the law fairly, impartially, and consistently. Torture and cruel treatment are prohibited. The rule of law limits the power of the government. No government official is expected to go beyond these boundaries. No State official, appointed or elected, or even political party has the authority to tell a judge how to rule on a case. Office holders are not permitted to use their position to enrich themselves. Independent courts or established bodies can punish corrupt State officials, no matter who is guilty (Diamond, 2008; Fukuyama, 2000).

In advanced countries like the USA, Britain, France and Canada, where democracy has worked, citizens must not only participate and exercise their rights, but they must also follow certain democratic principles and rules. People must obey the law and refrain from using violence. Nothing justifies the use of violence against political opponents (Abati, 2011). Every citizen respects his or her fellow citizens' rights and dignity as human beings. No one is expected to label a political opponent as evil and illegitimate simply because they hold opposing views. People question the government's decisions but do not reject the government's authority. Every group has the freedom to exercise its culture and some degree of self-government. When people express their opinions, they should also listen to the views of other people, even people who may hold contrary view. Hence, everyone has a right to be heard (Fukuyama, 2000; Ukpong, 2011).

Above all, democracy requires compromise. Groups with opposing interests and viewpoints must be willing to sit down and negotiate. In a democratic state, one group does not always get its way. Different combinations of groups triumph on various issues. Over time, everyone benefits. If one group is consistently excluded and fails to be heard, it may become enraged and frustrated with democracy. Everyone who wishes to participate peacefully while respecting the rights of others should have some say in how the country is governed (Levitsky and Way, 2010; Ukpong, 2011). The above discourse is the ideal type that may be found in a well developed and stabilized liberal democracy. However, the reality may not encompass all the issues discussed above

Unemployment

There seems to be a consensus among the various stakeholders on the definition of unemployment. The International Labour Organization defines unemployment as the number of economically active people who are unemployed but available for seeking employment, including those who have lost their jobs and those who have chosen to leave their jobs (World Bank, 1998). Anyaele (2003) observed that unemployment is a situation in which some people that are of working age, skilled and eager workers who are unable to find suitable employment. Unemployment is defined by the NBS as the proportion of the labour force that is available for work but did not work for at least 39 hours in the week preceding the survey period (CBN Annual Report, 2008).

According to Abiodun (2010), unemployment is defined as the percentage of the labour force that is not employed at any given time. Unemployment is measured among people in the labour force (Obadan and Odusola, 2001; NBS, 2010). NBS (2009) defines labour force as a group of persons or citizens of a country, who are ready and able to put up their efforts at any given time in search of meaningful employment. The threat of unemployment is increasingly recognized as one of the socioeconomic issues confronting many developing countries, including Nigeria and Africa as a whole (Curtain, 2000; UNOWA, 2006).

For Olakitan (2015) defines unemployment as unemployed workers who are currently not working but are willing and able to work for pay, currently available to work and have actively search for work. Substantiating, Wayas, Selvadurai, and Awang (2019) views unemployment as "a situation in which persons capable and willing to work are unable to find suitable paid employment", while Investopedia (2017) defines unemployment as "the facts of a number of people not having a job; the number of people without a job; the state of not having a job". Unemployment may also be defined as a condition that exist when there is an individual who is able to work, is wishing to work, is dependent on work for survival but is unable to obtain an employment. International Statistical Standards state that the term "unemployment" should, in theory, meet the following three requirements: (i) being without work (ii) been available for work, and (iii) seeking work.

From the foregoing, Okochi, (1952) the foremost expert on social policy in postwar Japan, provides a good starting point. Okochi's viewpoint encompasses both developed and developing economies; when he published his thesis, Japan, his country of origin, was a developing economy that was just entering a period of tremendous development.

According to him, there are three aspects of the concept of unemployment. First, unemployment denotes that a worker, who does not have his own means of production, has lost his workplace. If he has his own workshop, and, or store, he cannot be unemployed. In such a case, if that worker cannot earn enough money to live, he is called "poor" or "underemployed," but he is not "unemployed" in a precise sense (International Labour Organization, 2004b). Second, the concept of unemployment makes the assumption that the unemployed person would continue to be willing to work; this is what Weber refers to as "the spirit of capitalism" in today's wage worker". Such a worker should not be idle and should make every effort to earn his own bread (Udu, and Agu (2015). Third, if a worker cannot find a job that suits his skill or ability set, it can be said that he is "unemployed". But technically, unemployment can be defined in a "broad" or "strict" way, based on the inclusion or exclusion of those without a job who are available for work, but are not actually seeking it. According to ILO (2013a), the irregular economic recovery and successive downward revisions in economic growth projections have had an impact on the global employment situation.

Furthermore, the Organization reports in addition to the already substantial number of jobseekers, the worldwide employment gap caused by the crisis has grown since the start of the financial crisis in 2008. This gap increased to 62 million jobs in 2013, comprising 32 million more jobseekers and 23 million people (International Labour Organization, 2013b). In the same year, the number of unemployed around the world rose to almost 202 million people, which is an increase of almost 5 million compared with the previous year. By implication, it is certain that employment is not increasing fast enough to keep up with the growing labour. These facts are supported by the World Bank's (2014) claim that youth unemployment is much higher than adult unemployment in every region of the world. The World Bank further shows that, in 2010, the world average for youth unemployment was 12.6 per cent, roughly 2.5 times higher than that of adults. In South Africa for example, the people are getting frustrated as a result of unemployment. People in communities like Mazakhele frequently lament the lack of services, despite the fact that they feel they voted in democratic elections for a better life (Mzizi, 2017). Some of the unemployed people do, from time to time, protest and express their frustration about the lack of job creation in South Africa.

Youth Unemployment

Unemployment occurs when people are unemployed and have actively sought employment within the last four weeks (ILO 2007). According to Fajana (2000), it is a situation in which people who are willing and capable of working are unable to find suitable paid employment. It is defined by (Patterson et al, 2006) as a situation in which people who are willing to work at the prevailing wage rate are unable to find work. It is one of the macroeconomic issues that every responsible government must monitor and regulate. The higher an economy's unemployment rate, the greater the poverty level and associated welfare challenges.

Unemployment is a developmental issue confronting every developing economy in the twenty-first century, and Nigeria is no exception. Its effects are felt more strongly by youths, leading to youth unemployment. Okafor (2010) observed that unemployment is a global trend, but it is most prevalent in developing countries, with attendant social, economic, political, and psychological consequences. Thus, according to Oyebade (2003), in every country, high rates of youth unemployment are a sign that there are deeper issues at play. The unemployed in Nigeria can be divided into two groups: the older unemployed, who lost their jobs due to retrenchment, redundancy, or bankruptcy, and the younger unemployed, the majority of whom have never worked.

Scholars such as Echebiri, (2005), Gibb and George, (1990), and Onah, (2001) contributed to the discussion by defining youth unemployment as a group of young people who are willing and able to work but cannot find any. When the demand for labour is higher than the supply, joblessness and unemployment result. Due to inadequate job chances in the sector of organized labour, young people may be forced to engage in casual work and other unconventional sources of income, resulting in underemployment.

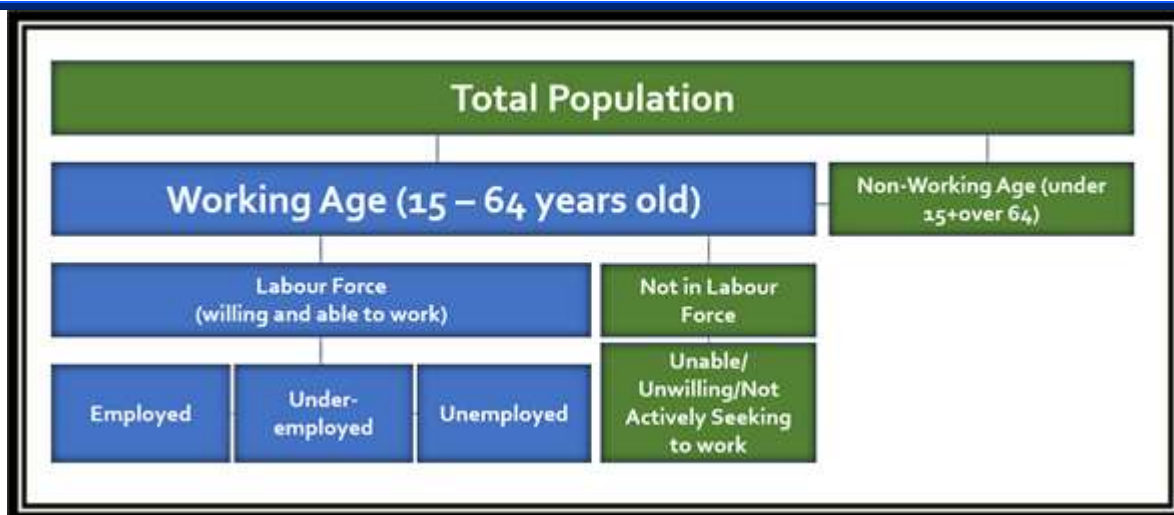
According to the Manpower Board and the Federal Bureau of Statistics, Nigeria has an 80 million youth population, accounting for 60% of the total population. There are 64 million unemployed people and 1.6 million underemployed people. According to data on youth unemployment from 1990 to 2000, secondary school graduates make up the majority of the unemployed. There is also a 40% unemployment rate among 20-24 year old urban youths and a 31% rate among 15-19 year olds. Two-thirds of the urban unemployed are between the ages of 15 and 24. Furthermore, the educated unemployed were mostly young males with few dependents. There are fewer secondary school graduates, and primary school graduates have lower job expectations. In Nigeria, there is no recurring pattern in unemployment rates. An increase in one or two years is occasionally followed by a decline in the following years (Okafor, 2011).

Thus, youth unemployment hinders the progress of and development of a nation as well as becoming a source of devastating social tension and conflict. The youths are young, energetic, vibrant and an important resource that should not be left idle especially in a democratic setting. As Zango (2015) pointed out succinctly, as a social group, youth account for a sizable percentage of Nigeria's population, accounting for 53,552,331 or approximately 38.1%. According to the Nigerian Youth Policy, youth are defined as individuals aged 15 to 35 years.

A June 10, 2003 editorial in *Punch* referred to a 2001 report by the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) stating that the country's universities and other tertiary institutions produce an average of 120,000 graduates each year, while every year, 500,000 school dropouts or college graduates are produced with no prospects. Although NAPEP admitted that no figures on the actual number of unemployed were available, the agency stated that 50% of the unemployed are assumed to be youths (*The Punch Newspaper*, 2003).

Labour force and Non-labour force

Nigeria's total population is divided into labour force (currently active) and non-labour force (not currently active). Whether or not they are employed, any individuals between the ages of 15 and 64 who are willing and able to work are considered to be part of the labour force population. As a result, the definition of unemployment includes people (aged 15 to 64) who were willing to work and actively seeking employment during the reference period but was unable to find work. Non-labour force population includes those under the age of 15 or older than 64, in addition to those between the ages of 15 and 64 who are unable to work, are not actively seeking work, choose not to work, and/or are not available for work.



Source: Proshare (2021), NBS, (2020).

Voluntary full-time housewives, underage children 14 and under, adults over 65, full-time students, those in active military service, physically challenged and incapacitated individuals whose incapacity prevents them from working are examples of these. As a result, labour-force growth fluctuates and is dependent on decisions made by members of the economically active people, which vary between cultures, religions, and other academic, economic, and family factors, regarding whether or not to work. As an illustration, a housewife may choose to work to supplement the family's income owing to changes in the husband's pay or additional family requirements, or an individual may choose to take time off work to complete a master's degree or recover from illness.

YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT TRENDS IN NIGERIA

In line with its statutory mandate to provide government and policymakers with reliable and timely information, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) routinely computes and disseminates the labour force statistics. These figures were compiled for this report from a national socioeconomic survey, which sampled thirty-three thousand three hundred households across the country, both in urban and rural areas. In this exercise, indicators such as the labour force participation rate, economically active population, unemployment rate, and underemployment rate were estimated to assist the government and policymakers in their job. The most current study on unemployment was done in the second quarter of 2020, and the results showed a 27.1% unemployment rate and a 28.6% underemployment rate. After the Telephone-based Abridged Labour Force Survey (TLFS) under Covid-19, Quarter 2 (Q2) 2020, was a success, efforts to continue producing this crucial economic indicator, which will offer much-needed data on the country's employment and unemployment rates, continues. NBS conducted this round of the survey utilizing the standard face-to-face interview for data collection after the government lifted movement restrictions in Q4 2020, in compliance with the Covid-19 rules and protocols for interactions (Proshare, Monday, March 15, 2021).

To gather the data required for this study, the Computer Assisted Personnel Interviewing (CAPI) technique was employed. The information was gathered across the Federation's 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). Enumeration Regions (EAs) in both urban and rural areas were canvassed throughout the exercise. The Computer Assisted Personnel Interviewing (CAPI) method was used to gather the necessary data for this study. The 36 states that make up the Federation as well as the Federal Capital Territory all participated in the data collecting (FCT). Enumeration Areas (EAs) in both urban and rural areas were surveyed for the exercise. This survey's scope included the following areas:

- i. Identification of Households and Enumeration Areas (EAs)
- ii. Demographic Profiles of Household Members
- iii. Economic activities undertaken by household members
- iv. Work history and the labour force's occupational profile
- v. Number and characteristics of unemployed people.

The National Integrated Survey of Households (NISH) Frame was used in the sample design. The final sample size was determined through a two-stage selection process. First, 60 Enumeration Areas (EAs) were selected in each state and FCT, for a total of 2220 EAs nationwide. In a second phase of selection, 15 households from each EA were chosen for interviews, with 900 households per state being included. 33,300 households in total were produced nationwide as a result, serving as a representative sample for state-level reporting (Proshare, 2021; NBS, 2020).

Two levels of training were conducted to adequately prepare the interviewers and data monitors for the exercise. The first was Trainer Training (TOT). This was done at the Headquarters. The questionnaire and exercise methodology were taught to experienced officers from the headquarters. This level of training was attended by coordinators and stakeholders.

At this level, data monitors and back-checkers from the headquarters were also trained. The interviewers were then given additional training. This training was conducted throughout the country, including the FCT. Teams, team leads, state officers, and zonal controllers from various states were present. Each state was assigned 12 interviewers. In the state, the field staff was divided into four Roving Teams, each with one team leader and two teammates. Each survey team visited 15 EAs, interviewing 15 HHs per EA. The fieldwork lasted 17 days (Proshare, 2021; NBS, 2020).

To guarantee the quality of the returns, a strong data monitoring system was implemented. The fieldwork was monitored by NBS headquarters employees, state officials, and independent monitors. NBS H/Q Monitors were on the ground for five days to monitor at the beginning of the field exercise. Random spot inspections of EAs were conducted and NBS State officers watched the fieldwork the entire time to ensure efficient and effective quality data gathering (Proshare, 2021; NBS, 2020). On a daily basis, interviewers were required to submit their completed interviews to the server, and a team of data editors would scrutinize each return before approving it for analysis. Suspicious returns were rejected and returned for further review and clarification. A team of back-checkers also called respondents at random from completed returns to confirm that they provided the information contained in the interviews. All of this was done to ensure that the information gathered was of high quality and reliable.

The NBS data processing team processed the returns using STATA software, following the appropriate procedures and standards for computing labour force statistics.

Distribution of Responses by State

N/O	State	Responses	Percentage
1	Abia	836	92.89%
2	Adamawa	875	97.22%
3	Akwa Ibom	884	98.22%
4	Anambra	802	89.11%
5	Bauchi	894	99.33%
6	Bayelsa	885	98.33%
7	Benue	865	96.11%
8	Borno	628	69.78%
9	Cross River	857	95.22%
10	Delta	899	99.89%
11	Ebonyi	856	95.11%
12	Edo	853	94.78%
13	Ekiti	871	96.78%
14	Enugu	828	92.00%
15	Gombe	875	97.22%
16	Imo	870	96.67%
17	Jigawa	818	90.89%
18	Kaduna	879	97.67%
19	Kano	807	89.67%
20	Katsina	834	92.67%
21	Kebbi	827	91.89%

22	Kogi	802	89.11%
23	Kwara	892	99.11%
24	Lagos	790	87.78%
25	Nasarawa	841	93.44%
26	Niger	899	99.89%
27	Ogun	676	75.11%
28	Ondo	859	95.44%
29	Osun	812	90.22%
30	Oyo	863	95.89%
31	Plateau	881	97.89%
32	Rivers	799	88.78%
33	Sokoto	860	95.56%
34	Taraba	894	99.33%
35	Yobe	873	97.00%
36	Zamfara	803	89.22%
37	FCT Abuja	858	95.33%
	Total	31,145	93.53%

Source: Proshare (2021).

Findings

Response Rate

A total of 31,145 interviews were done out of the 33,300 initial samples, resulting in a 93.53% response rate at the end of the study.

The distribution of replies by State is displayed in the table below, along with each State's individual response rate.

Distribution of Working Age Population

According to the survey's findings, there were 122,049,400 people in the working-age population, also known as the economically active population, between the ages of 15 and 64 during the survey's reference quarter in Q4, 2020. This is 4.3% more than the 116,871,186 figure from the second quarter of 2020. Males make up 49.5% of this total, with females making up 50.49%. The biggest percentage of the active population, 30.2%, is found to be between the ages of 15 and 24, which is further broken down by age group. With 10,221,108 people, or 8.37% of the overall active population, those aged 55 to 64 had the lowest active population.

Distribution of Working Population by Age and Sex

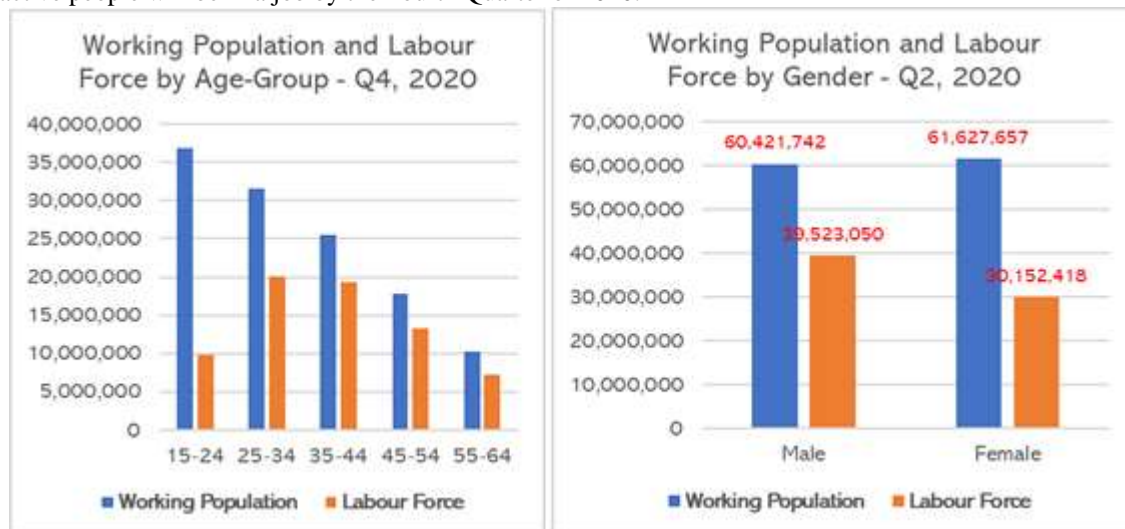
Age -Group	Male	Female	Total
15-24	18,380,640	18,483,275	36,863,915
25-34	13,625,712	17,982,769	31,608,481
35-44	12,759,156	12,791,331	25,550,488

45-54	9,868,444	7,936,964	17,805,408
55-64	5,787,790	4,433,318	10,221,108
Total	60,421,742	61,627,657	122,049,400

Source: Proshare (2021).

Labour Force

The number of people in the working force is estimated at 69,675,468 (i.e., those between the ages of 15 and 64 who are able and willing to work). This was a 13.22% decrease from the second quarter of 2020 in terms of population. Of this total, 29%, or 20,091,695 persons, were between the ages of 25 and 34. In the working population or the economically active population, this is the approximate number of persons who are available and willing to work. According to this, just 57.09% of Nigeria's economically active people will be in a job by the Fourth Quarter of 2020.



Source: NBS, (2020), Proshare (2021).

In contrast to the economically active population, the age group 25-34 accounts for the greatest proportion of the labour force. This is to be expected, as most people between the ages of 15 and 24 are enrolled in some form of education and thus are not willing or available for work. While females outnumber males in the active population, the reverse is true in the labour force, where males outnumber females by 56.72% to 43.28%.

Labour Force - Q4, 2020

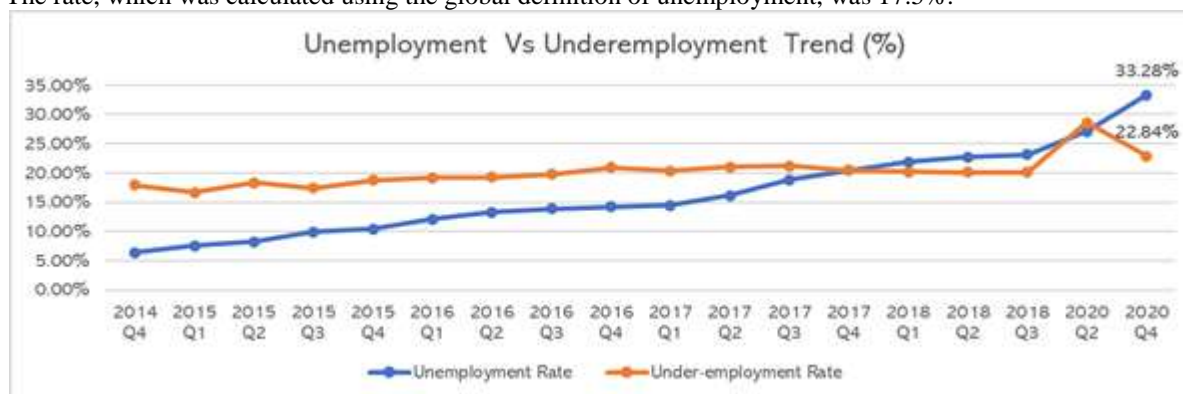
Indices	Variable	Response
Gender	Male	39,523,050
	Female	30,152,418
Total		69,675,468
Age-Group	15-24	9,853,103
	25-34	20,091,695
	35-44	19,268,957
	45-54	13,302,064
	55-64	7,159,649
Total		69,675,468

Place of Residence	Urban	26,459,732
	Rural	43,215,736
Total		69,675,468
Educational Qualification	FSLC	9,240,842
	Middle School Leaving Certificate	326,025
	Vocational/Commercial	233,535
	Junior Secondary School Certificate	3,351,293
	SSCE	22,031,170
	A' levels	748,228
	NCE/OND/Nursing	5,779,243
	BA/BSc/HND	5,940,545
	Tech/Prof	187,033
	Masters	349,306
	Doctorate	73,859
	others (specify)	761,792
	None	20,652,597
Total		69,675,468

Source: NBS, (2020), Proshare (2021).

Statistics on Unemployment and Underemployment at the National Level

During the reference period, the calculated national unemployment rate rose from 27.1% in Q2, 2020 to 33.3% in Q4, 2020, whereas the underemployment rate decreased from 28.6% to 22.8%. When the rates of underemployment and unemployment for the study period were combined, the result was 56.1%. This indicates that 23,187,389 people, or 33.3% of the labour force in Nigeria, either didn't work at all or worked for fewer than 20 hours per week, making them, by our definition, unemployed in Nigeria (Proshare, 2021; NBS, 2020). By comparison, there were 1,422,772 more people in that category in the Second Quarter of 2020. The rate, which was calculated using the global definition of unemployment, was 17.5%.



Source: NBS, (2020), Proshare (2021).

When looking at educational attainment, those who listed A' levels as their highest degree had the greatest unemployment rate (50.7%), followed by those with first degrees/HNDs (40.1%). The lowest rate of unemployment was experienced by those with a doctorate as their highest level of education, which was 16.9% during the reference period. The age groups with the highest unemployment rates were those between the ages of 15 and 24 (53.4%), followed by those between the ages of 25 and 34 (37.0%), giving the whole youth population a 42.5% jobless rate.

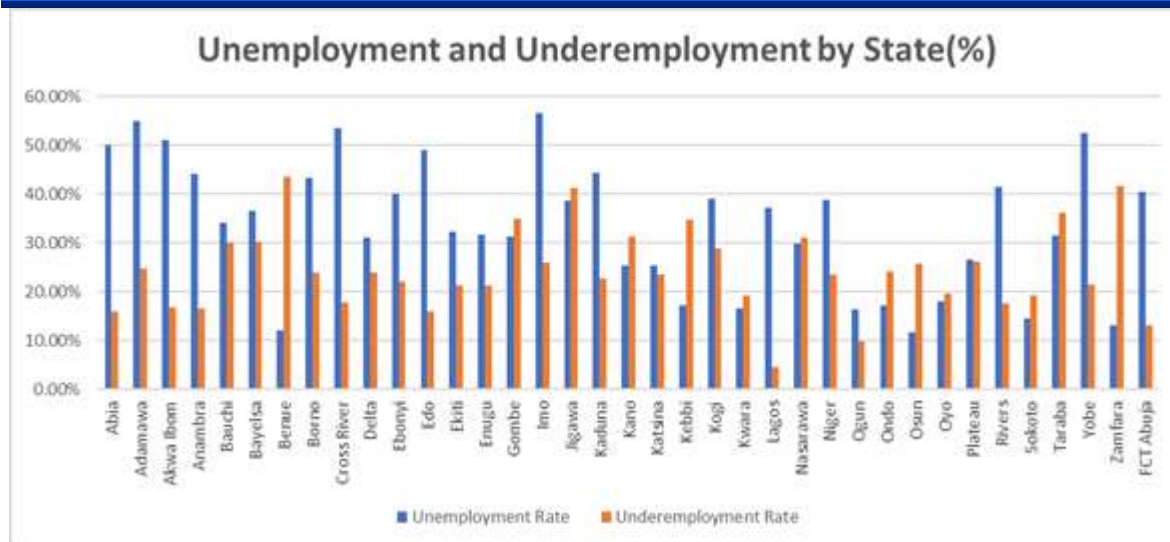
When looking at underemployment rates by age bracket, persons between the ages of 55 and 64 had the highest percentage, at 25.7%. The group with the next highest rate of underemployment was those between the ages of 45 and 54, with 24.4%, while those between the ages of 15 and 24 had the lowest rate, at 19.8%. Ages 15 to 24 reported a combined rate of 73.2% for both underemployment and unemployment, indicating a significant problem for this age group in securing full-time employment. During the reference period, female unemployment stood at 35.2%, while male unemployment was at 31.8%. Similar statistics were found for underemployment: females reported a rate of 24.2%, while males reported a rate of 21.8%. Rural residents had an unemployment rate of 34.5%, compared to urban residents' 31.3%. Rural residents reported a rate of underemployment of 26.9%, compared to a rate of 16.2% for urban residents.

State-Level Unemployment and Underemployment

Imo State has the highest rate of unemployment among the states, at 56.64%. Cross Rivers State came in second with 53.65%, followed by Adamawa State in second place with 54.89%. The lowest rates were in Osun, Benue, and Zamfara, at 11.65%, 11.98%, and 12.99%, respectively. Jigawa State (41.29%), Zamfara State (41.73%), and Benue State (43.52%) had the highest rates of underemployment, respectively (NBS, 2020; Proshare, 2021).

Labour Market Statistics:							
Year /Quarter	Employed ('000)	Time-related underemployed ('000)	Fully Employed ('000)	Unemployed ('000)	Not in Labour Force ('000)	Labour Force Population ('000)	Working Age Population ('000)
2015-Q1	67,903	12,209	55,694	5,534	29,388	73,436	102,824
2015-Q2	67,947	13,571	54,376	6,063	29,557	74,011	103,568
2015-Q3	68,422	13,206	55,217	7,518	28,374	75,940	104,314
2015-Q4	68,922	14,416	54,506	8,036	28,065	76,958	105,023
2016-Q1	69,001	15,023	53,978	9,485	27,515	78,487	106,001
2016-Q2	67,991	10,644	57,347	11,895	26,804	79,886	106,690
2016-Q3	68,772	11,198	57,574	11,897	27,364	80,669	108,033
2016-Q4	69,472	11,549	57,923	11,680	27,440	81,152	108,592
2017-Q1	70,666	16,837	53,829	11,926	26,847	82,592	109,439
2017-Q2	70,355	17,679	52,676	13,585	26,346	83,940	110,287
2017-Q3	69,090	18,029	51,061	15,998	26,046	85,088	111,134
2017-Q4	68,866	17,701	51,166	17,671	25,581	86,538	112,119
2018-Q1	68,955	17,801	51,154	19,251	24,962	88,207	113,169
2018-Q2	69,166	17,992	51,174	20,344	24,802	89,509	114,311
2018-Q3	69,543	18,216	51,327	20,928	25,022	90,471	115,493
2020-Q2	58,527	22,942	35,585	21,765	32,097	80,292	116,871
2020-Q4	46,488	15,915	30,572	23,187	52,373	69,675	122,049

Source: NBS, (2020), Proshare (2021).



Source: NBS, (2020), Proshare (2021).

Imo, with an 82.5% rate, had the highest percentage of both underemployment and unemployment, followed by Jigawa, with an 80% rate. The lowest combined rates were in the states of Ogun and Sokoto, at 26.2% and 33.7%, respectively (Proshare, 2021).

International Unemployment Rate

In comparison to other countries, we follow the ILO's standard of one hour of work each week. According to this metric, Nigeria's current unemployment rate is 17.5%. When compared to other countries, Nigeria currently ranks 19th with the highest unemployment rate out of 181 with rates published within the last two years. Bosnia and Herzegovina (33.7%), Namibia (33.4%), and South Africa (32.5%) currently have the highest unemployment rates, while Qatar (0.1%), Belarus (0.2%), Niger (0.3%), and Myanmar (0.7%) have the lowest. It is important to note that the reference periods and methodology for calculating the unemployment rate may vary between countries. As a result, a direct comparison of unemployment rates across countries may be invalid (Proshare, 2021; NBS, 2020).

IMPLICATIONS OF UNEMPLOYMENT IN NIGERIA

The socio-economic effects of unemployment in Nigeria, like most other African countries is very severe and threatening to the citizenry and the economy as a whole. The unemployment crisis has continued to pose numerous challenges to Nigeria's survival. While some of these consequences have a direct impact on the unemployed, others, such as epidemics, have far-reaching consequences. These socio-economic effects that results from unemployment are discussed below.

1. Unemployment and Personal Well – Being: Unemployment in Nigeria has a very serious negative effect on the personal well – being of the unemployed. Until recently when a very small number of the affected people benefited from the poverty reduction program of the government, the effect was quite severe on those involved. In cross sectional regressions, there is clear evidence that unemployment is associated with lower levels of psychological well – being (Machin and Ezie Obumneke Manning, 1998). In terms of its impact on arbitrary measures of personal well-being, unemployment is slightly worse than divorce. The dehumanizing effects of unemployment result in a partial or complete loss of respect from peers. The unemployed perceive life as completely demeaning and feel inferior to his peers. Many of the Nigerian jobseekers are in this scenario.

2. Unemployment and Poverty: One of the core causes of poverty in Nigeria today is the inability of many job seekers to secure gainful employment. This has further worsened the income inequality crisis that characterizes most African economies. Largely, the increasing level of unemployment can explain the increasing level of poverty in Nigeria for which available information currently puts at 70 percent. Many people in Nigeria and the rest of Africa have been accustomed to a very low and degrading standard of life as a result of this terrible trend of unemployment rate in the face of rising costs of living.

3. Unemployment and Social Crimes: Unemployment accounts for most of the social crimes perpetrated by youths in the Nigerian society today. The predominance of unemployment can be partly blamed for the growth in violent crimes such as rape, armed robbery, and prostitution. Many young people who engage in criminal activity are unemployed, according to an analysis of the bulk of the criminals who have been captured. Some of these offenders have the ability to earn a living, but they haven't been given the chance. Thus, unemployment can be considered as one of the main reasons why social unrest and security are increasing across the nation.

4. Unemployment and Economic Growth: The adverse effect of high unemployment on the domestic economy cannot be quantified. If abundant human resources are utilized, they can serve as a great catalyst for economic growth, but if not, they can have a negative impact on the economy. Unutilized large quantities of human resources in Nigeria due to a lack of employment opportunities have continued to stymie growth prospects in a variety of ways. The consequences of unemployment, such as violence and general insecurity, pose a significant threat to economic growth and development. As a result, rather than being a source of growth stimulation, the army of the unemployed remains a potential threat to the economy's well-being. It is critical to note that prolonged unemployment usually results in some form of social pathology, as evidenced by an increase in crime and violent agitators. It encourages dissatisfaction with the government, and even a small provocation or incident can lead to tense protests and widespread social unrest that, if handled improperly by the authorities, could end in casualties and material loss.

CONCLUSION

In order to function properly, democracy and its procedures must, of course, take into account the ambitions of the people it is meant to represent. However, the Nigerian democratic enterprise has been hampered by a dearth of concepts, a lack of advancement, arbitrariness, and an overall insularity of the people's rights and privileges as written in the Constitution. As a result, Nigeria's political economy has been characterized by political insecurity, abject poverty, acute youth unemployment, an increased crime rate, poor health prospects, and widespread malnutrition. This supports the claims made by some academics that one of Nigeria's biggest issues is its governance. The Nigerian youth are facing myriad of challenges of not only unemployment, but a lot of social and economic problems which are as a result of non applicability of democratic ideals though the government always claimed to have put in place measures of addressing such problems. However, the unemployment challenges linger and increase day by day. These youth are of two categories; those that have either dropped out of schools or those who managed to pass through and completed schools without opportunities to be adequately engaged. They therefore loiter around from dawn to dusk seeking for any kind of opportunity to settle their scores which unfortunately coincided with the unscrupulous Nigerian politicians who find them a useful tool to employ as political thugs of achieving their selfish economic and political interests. Generally speaking, these are people that are supposed to be useful in the development of the countries nascent democratic experiment but they are left to constitute the nuisance punctuating the development of their dear country despite the fact that they can be utilize to become productive.

Against this backdrop, that this study recommended the following as a solution to the problems challenging Nigerian youth especially in respect of their unemployment debacles:

- 1) Since the youth constituted the major part of the Nigerian labour market then there is the need for the government work tirelessly to promote national development and establish an atmosphere that will foster economic growth and provide job opportunities for the nation's young people.
- 2) The government should formulate and effectively implement proper policy measures that will drastically decreases the country's youth unemployment rate particularly through vocational/technical training of the teaming youths roam on streets joblessness.
- 3) In order to reduce rural-urban migration, which raises the unemployment rate in the nation, the government should provide social amenities in rural areas. Additionally, the problem of power should be effectively addressed nationally because it has an impact on every sector of the economy.
- 4) Entrepreneurship education should be encouraged at all levels of our educational system to inculcate entrepreneurship attitude and entrepreneurial mindset in students at all levels of education for self-employment and eventually self-reliant.

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