

**A SOCIAL-RELIGIOUS APPROACH TO CURBING YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT FOR
SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOOD IN DELTA STATE, NIGERIA**

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the rise in the number of unemployed youths in Delta state, and the role of both the government and religious institutions in curbing this menace. The survey design was used in the study. The sample of the study comprised of 350 respondents of which 200 were youths, and the remaining 150 were adult respondents. The data were analyzed using the mean and standard deviation, on a 4 category likert scale. At the end of the study it was discovered that the youths and adult diverged as to the cause of unemployment in Delta State. The attribution theory was used and measures such establishing more jobs, enabling graduates with skills, and religious institutions assisting her youth population with jobs and job skills, among others, were suggested as recommendations.

Introduction

In Nigeria, youth unemployment has been identified as one of the pressing problems facing the country and efforts at curtailing this has not yielded the needed result especially in Delta State, located in the south southern part of Nigeria. The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (2009) in its definition of a youth says that it is a period of passage from the dependence of childhood to adulthood's independence and awareness of interdependence with other members of a community. Furthermore, the second Nigerian National Youth Policy (2009) sees youths as those that are characterized by energy, enthusiasm, ambition, creativity, and promise; they are faced with high levels of socio-economic uncertainty and volatility thereby becoming the most, vulnerable segment of the population. As to who constitute a youth, the

United Nations places the youth as those within the age bracket of 15-24, but due to cultural, social and some institutional factors, the age bracket is not being used for statistical purpose in Nigeria. According to the NYP (2009:6), “the youth shall comprise of all young males and females aged 18-35 years old who are citizens of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.” At this age, the youth is believed to undergo serious all round development be it socially, politically, or culturally among others.

Youth Unemployment on the other hand could be seen as a state where someone of working age is not able to get a job but would like to be in full time employment”(Tejvan, 2010). Although, Tejvan based his argument on full time employment, a youth with a part time job is also an employed youth but the part time job should not be less than 20 hours a week, for it would be considered as unemployment (Nigerian Bureau of Statistics, 2015). Furthermore, when someone works for less than 40 hours a week, he is said to be underemployed. The Nigeria Bureau of Statistics on unemployment and underemployment watch in first quarter of 2016, says that working less than 40 hours is an underutilization of your skills, time and educational qualifications, among others. Due to the fact that Delta State has some youths who don't sought for jobs, it is only when youths who are without jobs and have actively sought for job and got none, that it is then said that the youth is unemployed (International Labour Organization 2007 as cited in Emeh 2012; Dennis, Ignat, & Fares 2012).

Youth unemployment survives in Delta state due to a number of factors. Coenjaerts, Ernst, Fortuny, Rei, and Pilgrim (2009) note that, youth face higher barriers to entry into the labor market due to their lack of experience. Furthermore, the rise in youth population was effectively counterbalanced by a steady economic growth” (O'Higgins, 2001). When an economy is in recession and the growth of her youth population is in ascension, there are bound to be problems, just as what is currently happening in Delta State. Apart from rising population, Tunji (2014) adds that deficient school curricula and poor teacher training have contributed to the failure of educational institutions to provide their students the appropriate skills to make them employable. The aim of this paper is to critically access the cause of the hike in unemployment level in Delta State and to find working mechanisms to salvage the situation from escalating. This includes

government basing employment on transparency and sensitizing the youths on the need to shun crime and be hardworking.

Theoretical Framework

Fritz Heider theory of attribution propounded in 1958 serves as the theoretical underpinning of this paper. Hewstone, Fincham, and Jaspars (1983) noted that Heider proposition was that, “sometimes, when one's action or motives for the action are questioned, one has to give reasons. Interpersonal attributions happen when the causes of the events involve two or more individuals.” In this paper, the youths and governments are the individuals. Attribution theory assumes that people try to determine why people do what they do, i.e., attribute causes to behavior. A person seeking to understand why another person did something may attribute one or more causes to that behavior (Weiner, 1986). From the theory of attribution, it was discovered that it is of three stage process: (1) behavior is observed, (2) behavior is determined to be deliberate, and (3) behavior is attributed to internal or external cause (Richard, 2013). The utility of this theory was paramount because the actual cause of unemployment in Delta state is not crystal clear. So, what is central to Heider’s entire theoretical position is the proposition that man perceives behavior as being caused, and that the causal locus can be either in the perceiver or in the environment (Hastorf, Schneider, & Polefka, 1970).

Statement of the Problem

In Delta State, most youths prefer to remain idle. Youths seem to be lazy to do anything; what they are most interested is the collection of ‘development fee’ otherwise called “Deve” from persons building house or any other projects going on in their vicinity. Due to the fact that this developmental fee, which is not only illegal but obscene, is easy to get, it tends to make some of the youths to refuse to work any other work. Thus, when ever building projects are not going on in their locality they tend to engage themselves in arm robbery, pick pockets, kidnapping, and cultism which have claimed high number of youths to prison yards and death by mob.

Research Methodology

This paper utilized the survey design method in its analysis. The survey method was utilized because it gives room for population sample opinion to be taken and objectively analyzed. According to Nworgu (1991), a survey design is one in which a group of people or items is studied by collecting and analyzing data from only a few people or items considered to be representative of the entire group.” It uses approved appropriate questionnaires to gain responses from participants.

Hypotheses

HO₁ There is no significant difference in the mean responses of Adults and Youths with regards to the contributions of youths in unemployment hike in Delta State.

HO₂ There is significant difference in the mean responses of Adults and Youths with regards to the contributions of youths in unemployment problems in Delta State.

Area of Study

The Study was carried out in Warri North, Warri South, Ughelli South, and Uvwie Local Government Areas of Delta State. These areas were chosen due to the perceived number of unemployed youths it gathers.

Population of the Study

The sample of the study consists of 350 identified youths and adults respondents. Most of the respondents have faced unemployment problems before they had gainful employment. The population consists of 200 youths and 150 adults. The questionnaire was randomly assigned.

Research questions

The questions that guided the study are:

1. What is the rationale for measuring youth unemployment?
2. What societal factors enhance youth unemployment?
3. Do the youths contribute to youth unemployment?
4. What facilities and policies impede youth entrepreneurship mindset?

5. What have been the efforts of social and religious Institutions in ameliorating the plights of unemployed youths?

Instrument for Data Collection and Presentation of Data

The main instrument for the collection of the needed data was structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was titled “Socio-religious Approach to Curbing Youth Unemployment for Sustainable Livelihood Questionnaire (SACYUSL). It was administered to youths of 18-35 years of age and adults. The questionnaire has the information on the contributions of youths in contemporary unemployment problems, as well as causative factors.

The Population of the study consists of 350 respondents of which 200 were youths and 150 were adults. Respondents were drawn from residents in Warri North, Warri South, Ughelli South, Uvwie Local Government Areas of Delta State. A 4 level likert-type Scale was used. The decision rule used consisted of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (DA), Strongly Disagree (SD) with values 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively. The structured questionnaire consisted of 28 items; and 5 tables. The data collected were analyzed using a mean rating of 2.50, and any item with a mean rating of 2.50 and above were regarded as accepted while items with below 2.50 mean rating were regarded as rejected.

Method of Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. The t-test was used to test the null hypothesis at a 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Table 1: Mean Scores of Respondents on the rationale for measuring Youth unemployment

S/N	Items	YOUTH			ADULT		
		\bar{X}	SD	DEC.	\bar{X}	SD	DEC.
1	Youths who are willing to work but has no Job.	3.74	0.63	Accepted	3.53	0.54	Accepted
2	Youths who are unwilling to work but has work to do.	3.68	0.38	Accepted	3.85	0.24	Accepted
3	Lack of Jobs.	3.47	0.97	Accepted	3.61	0.75	Accepted
4	Urban youths not finding Jobs to do excluding rural youths.	2.17	1.27	Rejected	1.56	0.30	Rejected
5	Engagement in menial Jobs.	1.77	0.95	Rejected	1.81	0.53	Rejected
	Cumulative Mean/SD	2.97	0.84	Accepted	2.87	0.47	Accepted

Table 1 shows that when youths participate in menial job it cannot be seen as unemployment; and it also reveals that rural dwellers also suffer unemployment problems. However, it was generally accepted unemployment means when youths don't find jobs to do.

Table 2: Mean scores on those societal factors that enhances youth unemployment

S/N	Items	YOUTH			ADULT		
		\bar{x}	SD	DEC.	\bar{x}	SD	DEC.
6.	The state government.	2.16	1.73	Rejected	1.4	0.77	Rejected
7.	Local government.	3.24	0.97	Accepted	1.56	0.67	Rejected
8.	Falsification of age.	1.89	0.90	Rejected	2.44	1.49	Rejected
9.	Tribalism.	3.35	0.75	Accepted	3.29	1.31	Accepted
10.	Bribery.	3.22	0.83	Accepted	3.47	0.58	Accepted
	Cumulative Mean/SD	2.77	1.04	Accepted	2.4	0.96	Rejected

Table 2 shows that the youth and society contribute to the problem of youth unemployment. However, adult respondents had a different view by rejecting the fact that the society is the ultimate cause of youth unemployment, instead both youth and adult respondents agreed that tribalism and bribery are endemic factors to fostering unemployment indices.

Table 3: Mean scores on the contributions of the youths to unemployment paradigm

S/N	Items	YOUTH			ADULT		
		\bar{x}	SD	DEC.	\bar{x}	SD	DEC.
11.	Inexperience.	3.54	0.45	Accepted	3.25	1.10	Accepted
12.	Availability of labour skills.	2.54	1.48	Accepted	3.37	0.78	Accepted
13.	Lack of entrepreneurship mindset.	2.23	1.16	Rejected	3.41	1.59	Accepted
14.	Pride,	2.88	1.29	Accepted	3.35	0.68	Accepted
15.	Overpopulation.	1.61	0.65	Rejected	1.91	0.75	Rejected
	Cumulative Mean/SD	2.56	1.01	Accepted	3.06	0.98	Accepted

The data from Table 3 shows that the youths and adults population agree that youths contribute to unemployment pandemic in Delta State but rejected the thesis that overpopulation contributes to their unemployment.

Table 4: Mean scores on the facilities and policies that impedes youth entrepreneurship mindset.

S/N	Items	YOUTH			ADULT		
		\bar{x}	SD	DEC.	\bar{x}	SD	DEC.
16.	Power Supply.	3.64	0.49	Accepted	3.2	1.15	Accepted
17.	Too much Tax.	2.24	1.48	Rejected	2.41	1.36	Rejected
18.	Demolition of illegal constructions.	2.35	1.46	Rejected	1.94	1.04	Rejected
19.	Lack of Money.	3.18	0.94	Accepted	2.7	0.97	Accepted
20.	Bad Roads.	2.65	1.20	Accepted	3.53	2.64	Accepted
	Cumulative Mean/SD	2.81	1.11	Accepted	2.76	1.43	Accepted

From the Table 4, facilities such as power supply, lack of money and bad roads were collectively agreed to be a stumbling block to gainful youth employment.

Table 5: Mean scores on the efforts of social and religious Institutions in ameliorating the plights of unemployed youths

S/N	Items	YOUTH			ADULT		
		\bar{x}	SD	DEC.	\bar{x}	SD	DEC.
21.	Provision of skills education.	1.62	0.54	Rejected	1.99	1.03	Rejected
22.	Organization entrepreneurship seminars.	1.32	0.40	Rejected	1.7	0.90	Rejected
23.	Disbursing of Cash to the youths.	2.12	1.00	Rejected	1.97	1.57	Rejected
24.	Giving out of Generators to solve power problem.	1.49	0.90	Rejected	2.69	1.82	Accepted
25.	Creation of Jobs for the youths.	2.25	1.35	Rejected	1.96	0.84	Rejected
	Cumulative Mean/SD	1.76	0.84	Rejected	2.06	1.23	Rejected

From the data given in the table 5 above, it was discovered that social as well as religious institutions have not really done a lot to salvage the youth population from unemployment.

Table 6: T-test of the mean responses of Adults and Youths on the contributions of youths to unemployment in Delta State

Variables	N	X	SD	Df	T-cal.	T-crit.	Decision
Adults	150	3.06	0.98	348	4.66	1.65	HO ₁ is rejected
Youths	200	2.56	1.01				

From the t-test analysis above, the calculated t was found to be 4.66 while the critical t is 1.65. The null hypothesis of no significant difference is therefore rejected since the calculated t is greater than the critical value. Thus, there is significant difference in the mean responses of adults and youths with regards to the contributions of youths in unemployment problems in Delta State.

Discussions

The study investigated the factors that could be seen as contributory to the sustenance of youth unemployment in Delta State. From Table 1 youth unemployment generally means when youths cannot find jobs to do. This section was undertaken because of the fact that some youths where the respondents were drawn, had differing views on what youth unemployment really entails. At the end, this study discovered that youths engaging in menial jobs in order to make ends means should be regarded as gainfully employed and should not be regarded as unemployment. This findings were in consonance with World Bank Report (2015) that, “youth unemployment refers to the share of the labor force without work but available for and seeking employment,” and Bartley and Ferrie (2015:776-781) report that unemployment is “the proportion of all those of working age in a given area who do not have a job and are actively seeking one.”

Furthermore, findings show that in Delta state, the state government contributed minimally to the sustenance of youth unemployment. However, respondents agreed that the society contributes

optimally to youth unemployment due to nepotism, favoritism, demanding bribery from those seeking jobs, among others, as shown in table 2. According to Kazi (2004) the society brings specific social, economic, demographic, gender-related, cultural and population-related unemployment problems. Other interesting observations are that the youths in Delta state contribute to the survival of unemployment among their age group due to inexperience, non-availability of labour skills needed, pride of beginning with smaller jobs and lack of entrepreneurship spirit(although rejected by youth respondents(table 3)). Uzochukwu (2015) lucidly observes that, as Nigeria did not backup what the students are taught in their individual institutions of higher learning with practical background, that is the more reason she vomits graduates yearly who cannot make good impact to the society. When the graduates that are given out every year cannot defend what they studied, the only thing they do is to add to the unemployment level of the country.

In the same vein the study discovered that power supply, lack of finance and tax have highly impeded youth employment in Delta state (table 4).This assertion was in consonance with Uddin and Uddin (2013:399) that, “Nigeria is becoming hostile to investment due especially to lack of steady and sustainable power supply/energy crises in spite of the various attempts of reviving this sector leading to firms depending on generators for their operation whose cost of buying, fueling and maintenance are high, thereby increasing the cost of operation .” Also, Okwueze and Ononogbu (2013:12) observe that “many young people run businesses without registering them officially” due to the high tax effects. From Table 5, respondents agreed that religious and social institutions have failed in her voluntary roles of ameliorating the plights of youths. Both the youth and adult respondents put that, in terms of provision of skills acquisition programmes, creation of jobs, among others, religious and social institutions have failed.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the society as well as religious institutions have roles to play in Delta State as a response to the plight of the youths with regards to their unemployment status. These recommendations here under were made.

1. The government should utilize the ministry of youth development as a way of getting to Delta youths and make sure the ministry provides entrepreneurial sponsorships devoid of politics or tribalism and also make access to finance less tedious.
2. When finance is being disbursed to the youths the government should set up a fact finding committee to see to the fact that this monies are utilized judiciously.
3. Skills acquisition trainings should be included into academic curriculum in Delta state, this will serve as a medium of efficiency in job professionalism and career level.
4. The youths should also on their part shun laziness, this is in line with respondents view that some youths prefer to be idle even though they have gainful employment, because they prefer to sell their employment slot to others and collect some percentage at the end of every month from their 'client'. This act should be criminalized in the constitution and those caught in the act should be adequately punished.
5. Furthermore, youths should update themselves by being computer literates so as not to be victims of the 'digital divide' in contemporary social framework. Most employing firms are ICT compliant and would not like to employ ICT deficient individuals.
6. Religious institutions can also organize entrepreneurship summit for the youth population, where the youths are educated on some businesses with which to engage them.
7. Religious institutions should also help some of unemployed youths in their congregation with some finance to begin any business they fit well to do, according to the reach of that religious institution.
8. Non-governmental organizations could also help in salvaging the youths from their plight by helping to create jobs and without prejudice pass it on to the youth who are the beneficiaries.
9. Also, Faith Based Organization (FBOs) could organize skills training workshop for youths. These skills should include, Communication skills ,Honesty/integrity ,Teamwork skills, Strong work ethic , Analytical skills, Flexibility/adaptability ,Interpersonal skills ,

Motivation/initiative, Computer skills, Detail-oriented, Organizational skills, Leadership skills ,and Self-confidence skills which is in consonance with International Labour Organization job creation framework.

Conclusion

Youth unemployment in Delta state is at an alarming level. This has led to the youths engaging in social vices, which is inimical to the healthy growth of the Delta society. The government, religious bodies such as the church, as well as non-governmental organization should create jobs for the teeming youth population and ensure that tertiary institutions provide students with skills to make them employable, among other measures. The youths should on the other hand help themselves.

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Afro Asian Journal of Social Sciences
Volume VII, No IV Quarter IV 2016
ISSN: 2229 – 5313

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