

## SURVEY OF YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT IN IGBESA COMMUNITY OF OGUN STATE NIGERIA

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### ABSTRACT

*Democracy provides a veritable platform for the entrenchment and consolidation of people's welfare through institutional arrangements. However the current democratic experience in Nigeria is yet to engender the much anticipated good governance. This is reflective in the deepening massive youth unemployment, incidence of unpaid salaries by about 50% States in the Federation, deteriorating social institutions and structures culminating in pervasive poverty situation. Avalanche of literature and researches on unemployment situations are largely urban focused. This study adopts qualitative survey method to probe the subject of the study in a rural setting. The study observed that unemployment is antithetical to development as many of the vices plaguing the country are traceable to the menace of unemployment. The paper recommends among other things massive investment in Agricultural business and small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Vocational ventures should be made more enticing to the youth through direct support programs by the Government at various levels.*

**Key words:** Unemployment, Democracy, Development, SMEs and Poverty.

### INTRODUCTION:

The menace of youth unemployment has remained in the Nigerian economy and appears to have defied all the policy strategies adopted by successive governments. While the problem remains intractable, its management, the structure and dynamism of the economy do not seem to provide a solution. The increasing population of unemployed youth has therefore become a time bomb; a worrisome phenomenon that require greater sincere attention. There is an undeniable link between the soaring unemployment rate and the high rate of poverty and social vices currently bedeviling the country. Worse still, the country's education system is such that is tailored along lines that produce graduate lacking requisite mental infrastructure and vocational skills and therefore making many of them misfit in the labor market. The study explores in a holistic and multidisciplinary manner the implications nature and causes of unemployment amongst post-secondary school leavers. Its effect on socio economic and political structure was also examined. The scariest undertone of Nigerians socio – economic underdevelopment is the steady rise in youth crime, nurtured in a climate of dwindling economic fortune and the simultaneous failure of

employment – generation and poverty alleviation programs. Armed insurgencies ravaging the oil rich and volatile Niger Delta region are seemingly becoming insurmountable with the rampaging Islamic terrorist group known as Boko Haram getting entrenched by day. The prevailing situation makes a season of discontent and absolute dislocation in moral values among the teeming unemployed youths. The net effect has been a tragic precipitation of violent crimes ranging from assault, burglary, extortion, kidnapping, drug trafficking armed robbery, to suicide bombing. Other highlight of Nigerians prolific crime syndicates are economic fraud reflecting itself in various forms of corrupt practice, money laundering and racketeering. The social – economic impact of these burgeoning criminal activities has been severe causing sharp decline in the socio-economic fortune of the country.

Unemployment can be perceived as a state of having no work being experienced by persons who as members of the labor force perceive themselves and are perceived by others as capable of working. This means that the unemployed are those who are within the statutory working age but are jobless. In the opinion of Ajayi and Fasakin (2011), a person is unemployed if he or she is eligible for work but does not have a job. The term unemployment is used in literal sense to include all persons without work. Akamai (2010), defined unemployment as a number of people in the population who are willing and offer themselves for employment but could not be employed because of lack of vacancies for them.

The most apt definition of employment is the one given by Fajana (2010), where he noted that unemployment is a social – economic situation in which persons that have no work and are able and willing to work and are also actively seeking for work has no opportunity to work. That is, unemployment amount to a state of joblessness experienced by persons who as members of the labor force perceive themselves and are perceived by others as capable of working. This implies that the unemployed are those who are within the statutory working age but are jobless. All definitions of unemployment assume that the individual concerned is actively looking for work.

Avalanche of literature on the problem of unemployment in Nigeria are urban focused. The main thrust of this research therefore is to investigate the extent to which rural areas are affected by the problem of unemployment among the youth using Igbesa community as area of focus.

## Literature Review

Unemployment is one of the major developmental challenges facing every developing economy. International statistics portray that industrial and service workers living in developing regions account for about two-thirds of the unemployed (Patterson et al as cited by Ngwama, 2011) the magnitude of youth unemployment in Nigeria, according to Bamiduro, (2010) is causing increasing concern, as it is estimated that about 4.5 million new entrants, mostly educated youths are entering the labor market annually, a market that is already experiencing exceptionally high youth unemployment and underemployment rates.

In Nigeria, unemployment could be categorized into open unemployment and disguised unemployment. Open unemployment is usually associated with urban areas. It also involves people who are able and eager to work but for whom no suitable jobs are available. While disguised unemployment occurs mainly when people who are normally working fulltime but whose productivity is so low that a reduction in hours will have a negligible impact on total output.

According to the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics (NBS), the country's unemployment rate has increased to 9.9 percent in the third quarter of 2015, representing a fourth consecutive rise in the unemployment rate since the third quarter of 2014. The Bureau revealed that a total of 1,454,620 Nigerians are unemployed in this quarter compared to 529,923 in the second quarter and this has led to an increase from 8.2 percent in second quarter 2015 to 9.9 percent in the third quarter 2015. The International Labour Organization's (ILO) definition was used by the NBS to generate the above stated data. ILO's definition refers to the people who work less than full time, which is 40 hours, but work at least 20 hours on average a week. It also includes those that work full time but are engaged in an activity that underutilizes their skills, time and educational qualification ([ventureafrica.com/the unemplo...](http://ventureafrica.com/the-unemplo...))

Nigerian educational system has been criticized by several authors for producing graduates who are basically unemployable and thereby worsening an already bad unemployment situation in the country. The curricular has also been criticized for containing too much theory and insufficient practical orientation. Some courses frequently turn out surplus of certain skills and too few of

others. General education and training are not well correlated with employment opportunities within the economy. It is not enough to study unemployment to understand the deficiencies in the labor market; rather an understanding of the concept of under-employment has a tendency of deepening the depth of conceptualizing the problem of unemployment

The concept of unemployment can be understood within the context of the fact that many workers around the world tend to work less hours, earn less income or use their occupational skills incompletely. In other words, they tend to carry out an activity which is less productive than they could and would like to carryout (Greenwood, 1999). Underemployment reflects underutilization of workers productive capacity. It is about a person who has not attained full employment level in the sense of the Employment Policy Convention, full employment ensures that:

- i. There is work for all persons who are available for and seeking work ;
- ii. That such work is as productive as possible, and
- iii. That it is freely chosen by workers who should have the fullest possibility to qualify and use their skills and endowments in a job for which they are well suited (ILO, 1985). The situations which do not fulfill the objective {1} relate to unemployment and those that do not satisfy objective refer mainly to underemployment.

The consequences of growing youth unemployment and under employment are grave and scary. Dauda (2004), in a study submitted that unemployment has become potentially damaging because it imposes severe cost on the society. These ranges from: misery, poverty and social unrest amongst other which threatens security of the society and in the short and long run undermine economic growth and sustainable development. Other forms of effect of unemployment include growing pockets of conflicts, youth restiveness and militancy, political thuggery and other criminal behavior. With growing unemployment and underemployment of the youths, the nation has incurred enormous loss in terms of growth and development. It is no gainsaying that the youth unemployment crisis has substantially contributed to the nation's high poverty incidence.

It is a common saying that idle hand is the devil's workshop. Unemployment breeds frustration. In the face of this frustration and hopeless, some persons engage in one form of crime or the other in order to survive. Most of the crimes perpetuated by unemployed graduates are internet fraud, robbery and kidnapping. Scholars have argued that a poverty-ridden individual would readily take to social vices consequent upon low self-worth. Experts have also argued that the lower a person's self-worth and happiness is the higher the tendency of his depression. Whereas unemployment deprives a country the service of the most energetic segment of its population, it could also lead to high rate of insecurity and social upheavals.

The spate of kidnapping especially in the south – south and south – east and lately South West geo – political zones pose serious human security problems in Nigeria. This is a disincentive for investor and tourists and this has adverse effect on economic growth and development. There is also the likely tendency that more resources of the government would have to be channeled into maintaining security, thereby depriving other sector of the desired input for development.

Consequent upon limited job opportunities for people especially youths in the economy, the rate at which these young people leave the country to seek greener pasture abroad is alarming. Youth who are usually the most valuable element in the development agenda of any society are mostly involved in the mass emigration. The resultant effect of this is that the most needed ideas and energy of the country is lost to other places while under development persist in the economy. It is noteworthy that a great number of them (youth) resort to various illegal and dangerous means to get to area of better opportunities (usually Western Europe, North American and some Asian countries) sometimes only to end up in jail or get killed.

The rising poverty and dependency burden of the economy are traceable to the scourge of unemployment. This manifest in form of rise and spread of shanties and ghettos, overcrowded apartment, pollution, break down in the sewage system, spread of contagious diseases excessive depletion of aquatic life among others. This usually have far reaching implication for biodiversity and the environment especially with exploding human population. In essence, there exist a nexus between unemployment and crime rate (Ngwama 2011).

In Lagos (the country economic capital) for instance 273 civilians and 84 police men were killed in several criminal encounters between August 2000 and May 2001. Recent figures are even more alarming. In 2008 alone, Niger Delta violence claimed 1000 lives and accounted for 300 abductions, including those of 44 foreign workers. The idea that crime is often a means of survival is corroborated by the preponderance of criminal offences across Nigeria. It was posited by Akanbi (2010) that most of the people involved in robbery, prostitution, cyber-crime and kidnapping are mostly youths who could not gain employment after graduating from various institution in country. Bamiduro(2010) stressed that the magnitude of youth unemployment in Nigeria is causing increasing concern as it is estimated that about 4.5 million new entrants, mostly educated youth are entering the labor market annually, a market that is already experiencing exceptionally high youth unemployment and under employment rate.

#### Theoretical framework

This study is hinged on entrepreneurship theory. Entrepreneurism is an ideology based on individual needs to create and or to innovate and transform creativity and innovative desire into wealth creating and value adding undertaking for the individual's benefits and common good. This theory is apt to this study consequent upon the fact that the prevailing situation whereby governments at various levels find it difficult to pick wage bills and the industries that have not closed down are in the continuous process of "downsizing" or "right sizing", there is a paramount need for a departure from the past. Youths should be equipped and oriented towards being entrepreneur rather than being job seekers.

The theory according to Chinonye and Onochie (2011) was propounded by R.W. Kao in 1997 to describe an individual needs and desires to create and innovate ideas that can enhance wealth creation and employment generation within a particular environment. It inculcates entrepreneurial culture in individual; that is, the commitment of an individual to continuing pursuit of opportunities and developing an entrepreneurial endeavor to its growth potential for the purpose of creating wealth for citizenries and adding value to the society.

#### METHODOLOGY AND INSTRUMENTS



The study adopted survey design which involved the collection of information from a sample of individuals through their responses to questions. Qualitative method of study was used.

The Study Area: Igbesa community is a rural settlement with about forty secondary settlements and villages within its domain. It is one of the communities carved out of the former Egbado South Local Government to form a part of Ado-Odo/Ota Local Government Area of Ogun State. The paramount traditional ruler of the community is the Oba (the Olaja-Ekun) of Igbesa land. The stool is currently vacant consequent upon the demise of the last occupier of the stool. However, the community is currently being administered by the Council of Regents in collaboration with Chief Olagbaye Alamu (The Asiwaju of Igbesa Land). The main occupation of the people is trading. They also engage in hunting, fishing, wood carving, mat weaving and arable farming which are largely subsistent. There are also some large-scale mechanized farming, poultry and fishing establishments within the community. Igbesa community has mixed religious affinities. Before the advent of Christianity and Islam, the Igbesa aborigines were traditional religious worshippers. However, Christianity and Islam have been adopted by many while there are still pockets of traditional religious worshippers within the community.

Igbesa community is broadly divided into four quarters as follows: Ogona, Osi, Idomo and Igbe. The name Igbesa land embraces several communities extending as far as Agbara, Ketu-Adie-Owe and many other settlements usually referred to as 'Ejilas' and Erinlas'.

Data for the study were collected through two stages of qualitative approaches. That is focus group discussion (FGDs) and in-depth interview (IDI) which was elicited from opinion leaders. In all, eight FGD sessions were held among young school leavers between ages 18 and 40 and adult groups of 41 years and above within homogenous cohort e.g. separate sessions were undertaken for male and female with each group having two sessions. Two FDGs were held in each of the four quarters of the community with the participants drawn, using simple random sampling technique. In depth-interviews (IDI) were held with five opinion leaders who were identified through snowballing techniques. Content and descriptive analytical methods were employed to interpret and analyze the findings.

The study population was the entire youths and the adults of Igbesa community. However since all the individuals could not be contacted, sample was selected from the population for the study. Convenience sampling method under non-probability sampling technique was adopted to select thirty-one respondents who participated in the focus group discussion. However, snowballing method was used to select five community opinion leaders who participated in the study.

Focus group discussion and in-depth interview under qualitative method were the tools utilized to gather data and information for the study. Eight focus group discussion sessions were held in all and five in-depth interviews were conducted with five community opinion leaders' sampled for the study.

Being a qualitative study, content analysis was employed to interpret and analyze the findings. The samples of materials to be included in the analysis were decided by the researcher, secondly the categories of content that were measured were defined, and finally, the recording units were chosen (each item in its entirety)

#### Data Presentation/and Interpretation (Result and Discussion)

Table I: Percentage Distribution of Respondents in FGDs and their Socio-demographic Characteristics

Characteristics	Number	Frequency Percentage
AGE	Total number of participants = 36	100
18 – 40 (Ladies)	9	25
18 – 40 (Men-Youth)	10	27.8
41 & Above (Women)	8	25
41 & Above (Men)	9	25
Marital Status	36	100
Married	26	72.2



Single	8	22.2
Separated	2	5.6
Religion	36	100
Christianity	12	33.3
Islam	19	52.8
Traditional Religion	5	13.9
Occupation	36	100
Trading	14	38.9
Civil Servant	8	22.2
Farmer	5	13.9
Artisan	6	16.7
Others	3	8.3
Level of Education	36	100
No formal education	4	11.1
Primary School	6	16.7
Secondary School	16	44.5
NCE/OND	7	19.4
HND/1st Degree	2	5.6
Post Graduate	1	2.7
Others	-	-

Source: Field Survey 2015

In interpreting the result presented above, 17 female (9 ladies + 8 women) and 19 male (10 young men + 9 old men) participated in the study. The almost even proportion of male to female indicates that the study was gender sensitive. The age range also shows that the participants are

old enough to have independent opinion on the problem under focus. Twenty six of the participants (72.2%) are married while two of the participants (5.6%) had been married but by now separated. It can be deduced that incidence of early marriage is a common occurrence in the community in the sense that (9 ladies and 10 men) that is 52.3% have their ages between 18 and 40 years whereas only 22.2% of the participants are single (yet to be married). The table above indicates that more Muslims (52.8%) participated in the study. Although significant number of Christians 33.3% also participated with 13.9% traditionalists been involved in the study. It can be presumed, based on the outcome of the research that the community is Muslim dominated with a significant number of traditionalists. The people studied are mainly traders (38.9%) Civil Servants 22.2% and Artisans 16.7%. The location of an international market (Lusada Market) which opens on every fifth day may partially explain the high number of traders within the community. The table reveals that large majority of the participants have between no formal education and NCE/OND (91.7%). On the other hand, with 88.9% of the respondents having formal education at various levels it can be assumed that the subject of study is thoroughly understood by the vast majority of the participants consequent upon their educational attainment. The researcher made desperate effort to explain the focus of the study to the understanding of all the participants with a view to ensuring adequate responses are made by the participants. The level of active participation of the participants in the study can be interpreted to mean that they were all abreast of the focus of the research.

#### Interpretation of Results:

The incidence of absolute joblessness was discovered not to be a common occurrence in the area of study. Although various interactions revealed that there is a prevalence of under employment of many youths in the community. This was corroborated by a participant in a FGD session who stated that:

Unemployment is a problem that is largely identifiable with urban settlement like Lagos. Although farm land is becoming too far away from this community because the land in the immediate neighbourhood had been sold to those who

want to use it for building houses or industries yet indigenes would usually have land to farm. (Adult Male /FGD/Ogona quarters, 2015).

A participant in another FGD blamed the problem of unemployment on act of laziness among the youths. The participants blamed the pervasive incidence of unemployment on the neglect of agriculture by the various governments. He recalled a song which he claimed that he learnt during his school days as follows;

“iseagbeniseilewa, enikosiseyoo ma jale

Iwekiko, laisiokoatiada ,ko I pe o, ko i pe o”

Meaning: farming is the main economic activity here,

Anyone who does not work will take to stealing

Any academic attainment without knowledge in agriculture is

Incomplete.– (Adult Male/ FGD/Osi quarters, 2015)

Members of the group echoed the song and it made the discussion livelier.

Member of one of the male FGD commended the act of ingenuity’s of the youths in the area in making ends meet. He stated;

“bawoniodoomokurin, tabiolomogeyoo se jitikoniwaisekan se”

“It is not imaginable for a young able-bodied person to be jobless”(Adult Male/Interview/, 2015).

Another member said:

“alapa ma siseni baba ole”

“it takes being lazy for someone to have nothing to do in terms of employment”. ( AdultMale/ FGD/OgonaQuarters, 2015).

On incidence of crime and security within the community:

The study discovered that there is low crime rate in the community. An opinion leader in one of the IDIs ascribed the relative peace in the community to the vigilance of the security agents especially the local security apparatus being put in place. However, the researcher could deduce that the ‘low incidence of unemployment’ in the community is probably the main reason why crime rate is low. On the poor economic situation and incidence of crime in the community, he stated that;

“awon ode tinsogbogboadugbokookanni won nsedaada”.

Meaning “various vigilante groups are exceptional in their skills”.

Concerning the problem of unemployment, he lamented the deplorable unemployment situation especially among the youths in the community (Female/ FGD/Ogona quarters, 2015).

On the nature of trade that the people are involved in, it was discovered by the researcher that some of the youths who are into trading are largely involved in trans-border trade. This may be in connection with the closeness of the community to Idi-Iroko and Seme boarders. Agbara, Owode, Lusada, Atan, markets and some other big markets also serve as avenue for the exchange of goods, some of which are basically contra-bounds.

The FGDs and in-depth interview revealed that majority of the respondents are conversant with the problem of youth unemployment and greatly lamented its scary effects on socio-economic development of the country. However, the prevalence of underemployment did not attract due concern by the respondents. This is because a large majority of them do not appreciate what it means to be unemployed in the context of ILO’s definition of unemployment. Some of the interviewees frowned at an educational system that would take such number of years and end up leading to unemployment. “One in-depth-interviewee described it as a long journey leading to nowhere”. The problem of youth unemployment was described to be mostly common with graduates who usually become selective in their choice of job after school.

An interviewee blamed the problem of unemployment on the poor educational structure and curriculum which hardly emphasize practical training. He stated:

Many of the so-called engineers depend on artisans to carryout simple engineering exercise. (Adult Male /Interview/, 2015).

On the incidence of unemployment among youths in the community, the study discovered that a large majority of youths are involved in one economic activity or the other. Yet, there is a problem of underemployment in the community with many of the young individuals who are reported to be working in some industries as casual staff and some being engaged in not too rewarding ventures such as sales of GSM recharge cards.

#### DISCUSSION/FINDINGS:

The study intended in the first instance, to study the challenges of unemployment in a rural setting and the coping strategies being adopted. One major finding in course of this study is that there is hardly clear-cut dichotomy in terms of Yoruba language semantics between unemployment and under-employment.

The FGDs and IDI confirmed the existence of the problem of youth unemployment in Nigeria, but affirmed that it is not a serious problem within the community. This is because there are various ventures that occupy the youth in the community rather than for anyone to wake up and have nothing to do. An interviewee stressed that:

“This is an agrarian community. A youth cannot claim to have no job with the vast area of fertile land around us and an international status of Lusada Market. It is only a lazy person that won’t be engaged around here”. (Male/ Interview/Igbe quarters, 2015)

Although it is tempting to conclude that youth underemployment is not a very serious problem in the community. But a careful reflection on the outcome of the survey indicates that many able bodied young folks in the community are involved in less engaging ventures like sales of GSM recharge cards, repairs of handsets riding commercial motorcycles, and working as casual staff in some of the industries around the community. Some of them are also involved in illegal business of smuggling goods across nearby borders. All these merely confirm that many of the youths in the community are under-employed and this portends a daring consequence for the socio economic development of the area.

On why the community is experiencing low incidence of youth unemployment (as defined by the respondent):

It was discovered that many of the highly educated youths who are indigenes of the community are in Lagos in search of what a FGD participant described as “commensurate jobs”. When he was asked to explain what he meant, he stated that:

What will my graduate child be doing under my roof? Is it for him to join my arduous business of trading from one market to the other? “Biisin o ba la, o ye

kiomoinu re o la” meaning that if someone is not rich, at least the children deserve to be rich.

At another FGD, one of the participants stated that:

Many of the reputable and successful indigenes of the community are based in urban areas like Lagos. Some are even based abroad. It therefore stands to reason that any young person with good educational qualification who wants a well-paid job would relocate to urban centers.

This is suggesting that urban centers such as Lagos is having influx of young educated Nigerians who are in search of white/blue collar jobs. This may probably account for high crime profile of Lagos (The Guardian newspaper). This may further confirm the findings of Hibbert (2014) that the high unemployment rate among nation’s youth has huge implications for crime and violence in Jamaica.

#### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

The study reaffirms the earlier findings by researchers like Kadim(1999) that problem of youth unemployment is not as acute in the rural areas as it is in the urban areas because rural dwellers are usually self-employed in farming and non-agricultural enterprises. It can be concluded based on the findings of this study that youth unemployment in Nigeria usually culminates in rural-urban migration largely by youth segment of the population. This carries dire consequence for the economy and development. The lingering incidence of poverty, hunger, squalor, insecurity and socio vices are part of direct fallout, of massive unemployment and under employment.

There had never been a time that the problem of unemployment and under employment deserves a thorough attention of government and the policy makers than now. This is because the consequences of a growing unemployment phenomenon are such damning that no responsible and responsive government can afford to despise. While the government and policy maker take the leading role in a task of employment generation and focusing on curbing the causes of unemployment as discussed in this study, it behooves all and sundry to come on board with a



view to surmounting the hurdles of unemployment in the country. The various states Houses of Assembly are expected to be engrossed with debates on how to surmount the problem. If the problem is left unattended to by the government; it will simply confirm the opinion expressed by Balogun (2010) that the Nigerian ruling class seems incapable of solving this problem and that only the working class can take on the task of eradication the problem. It is the position of this paper that all hands must be on deck in an attempt to resolve the problem in view of the grave consequences it portends if left untracked.

The first step toward solving the problem of unemployment may involve massive re-orientation of the populace with a view to disabuse their minds of the wrong perception of Agriculture as poor people's business. Agricultural entrepreneurship programmes appear to be a potent means of tackling problem of unemployment. It is projected that if agricultural activities like establishment of poultry, fisheries, dairy, and plantations become highly rewarding economically, it may reduce rural-urban migration and to a great extent tackles the problem of unemployment. There may even be a need to resuscitate the moribund farm settlements of old. Education systems need to be reformed to be functional by aiming at developing the potentials and skills in the individuals. It is recommended that public policy should emphasis technical/vocational education leading to self-reliance and self-employment, innovation and entrepreneurship, while intense effort should be made to reduce corruption and institutional bottlenecks at all levels of government.

The various agencies of government such as Raw Material Research and Development Agency, National Technology Incubation Centre, Small and Medium Enterprise Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN), National Office of Technology Accusation and Promotion, National Poverty and Alleviation Programs (NAPEP), Subsidy Re-investment programs (SURE-P), National Directorate of Employment (NDE) and even Bank of Industries are expected to work in such a way that graduates with technical skills and entrepreneurship passion are encouraged in every way possible. Vocation skill acquisition policy during NYSC programs deserved to be vigorously encouraged through grants so as to equip beneficiaries of the programs with some form of take-off basis in the realm of entrepreneurship pursuit.

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