



Coping Mechanism among Unemployed Graduates in Mushin Local Government Area of Lagos State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores coping mechanism among unemployed graduates. Unemployment in Nigeria, particularly graduate unemployment has become pronounced in the last two decades due primarily to upsurge in the turn-out from tertiary institutions and inelastic labour absorptive capacity of the Nigerian labour market for the services of university and polytechnic graduates. The study employed both primary and secondary sources of data collection. The study revealed that youth should engage in profitable activities such as acquiring soft skills and expertise while still searching for job/employment rather than sitting idle at home or been lure into crime.

Keywords: Education, Graduates, Labour, Skills and Unemployment

INTRODUCTION

Unemployment among graduates in Nigeria is one of the most critical problems the country is facing. Nigeria is a country passing through multiple transitions, from the period of colonialism to independence, from illiteracy to literacy, subsistence agriculture to monetary economy, rural life to urban cosmopolitan life, from the day of employment to the days of mass unemployment. Year after year in Nigeria, the increasing number of graduates joining the labour market keeps rising geometrically and any hope for them to secure jobs looks pessimistic. The tempo of economic development does not keep pace with the rate of educational advancement. That a developing country should suffer from surplus labour is hardly surprising, but generally, unemployment is one thing and graduate unemployment is another. Unemployment has in all their ramifications come to stay with us since the era of oil boom.

According to Alanana (2003), unemployment is described as a situation where there are few jobs to go round the great number of people willing to work". Here, it could be both educated and uneducated people in the country. Graduates unemployment has become some of the basic economic social and political problems facing so many states in Nigeria recently. The graduates in this context are' generally the school leavers from our post primary and higher schools of learning. This pitiable "labour forces" that are left redundant are ever ready to put in their best services in any kind of jobs, but would not be called upon to do so because of the situation in the country.

In Lagos metropolis, there has been a persistent increase in the number of unemployed graduates of institutions of higher learning. It is a problem that has consistently forced itself on the minds of different people in different ages. It is time we redressed our mind sincerely to the issue of graduate unemployment. The past government officials in the state had failed to give an accurate employment figure of the labour

force available and this has perpetuated to pose some dangerous threats to the socio-economic stability of the state than usual.

On this note, therefore, it becomes imperative to conceptualize unemployment. Accordingly, Alanana (2003) construe unemployment (or joblessness) occurs when people are without work and actively seeking work. The unemployment rate is a measure of the prevalence of unemployment and it is calculated as a percentage by dividing the number of unemployed individuals by all individuals currently in the labor force. Also, Bello (1999) remarked, "unemployment connotes the scarcity of job both in public and private sectors. This may be traceable to mismanagement of productive resources, immobility of labour between jobs, economic crisis like oil doom just to mention a few especially in our predominately capitalist economy.

Other factors that might have contributed to this situation also remain an integral part of this research. Such factors include the expansion of the existing schools and establishment of new schools without a collateral increase in industries to absorb produced graduates, the behaviour of graduate 'themselves towards jobs like farming construction of roads, bridges, school, taxi cars and also the over-dependence of a mono-export-oriented economy etc. the efforts of the previous government in areas of infusion of skill orientation in educational scheme will be scrutinized in order to have a balanced analysis. Did the government evolves stringent measures aimed at eradicating problem of unemployment in the state or did they apply the myopic machineries which appealed to policy makers because of ease of execution?

The answer to this question requires meticulous evaluation in order to find a lasting solution. The researcher therefore, employed administration of questionnaire and review of past work in the same direction. Most regrettably, however, there is scarcity of domestic data relating to the number of unemployed graduate of school of higher learning in the study area.

Objectives of the paper

The main principal objective of this study/paper is to identify the coping mechanism among unemployed graduate youths in Akala, Mushin Local Government Area of Lagos State, Nigeria. And possibly to suggest measures of reducing unemployment in Lagos State, Nigeria based on the findings of this study.

LITERATURE/THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING

Lavacic and Rebmman (1982) in their book "An introduction to positive economics", discussed unemployment under the chapter "Goals and instruments of macro-policy". They failed to defined unemployment like others but they distinguished between voluntary and involuntary unemployment. Voluntary unemployment is when one is willing to accept the job at a given wage but no job is available. They however paid attention to involuntary unemployment, which are frictional, structural, deficient and search unemployment in any free society, when prolonged, it becomes structural unemployment, which is caused by structural changes in the economy. They also attributed some other causes of unemployment to failure of industries to adapt to changing circumstances. They posit further that defiant demand of unemployment is as a result of sufficient aggregate demand. Finally, they remarked some ways of controlling unemployment; the main of which making policies for retraining labour, and relocation of labour. They discussed the experiences of countries like North Ireland, Scotland, and England, but it would not be necessary, mentioning them because these countries are much more advanced than Nigeria.

Oluyele (2006) in an article titled "Approach to unemployment problem in Nigeria", stated that one of the causes of unemployment problem in Nigeria is the salary structure, which is regarded as operationally inefficient. He further said that the skills and supply opportunity of labour should be taken into' consideration when fixing salaries for different categories of workers. Also the salary structure should reflect the geographical location of the employment and how it affects the cost of living.

Lawal, (1982) added in his article "Technological solution to our socio-economic problem", stated that rural unemployment results in urban unemployment. This is due to the fact that the unemployed persons in rural areas move to the urban areas where they believed there are better chances of getting jobs. This point to the fact that immigration affects both the agricultural and non- agricultural industries adversely.

Lewis, (1958) in a research conference held in mid-west, USA adduced that unemployment in developing countries is caused by an unbracing programmes of governments. Most industries are concentrated in cities with the erroneous belief that only the cities can bear the over-head cost of industrialization improper

blending of modern technology and traditional manual operations, poor performance of public corporations which according to him provides less than proportionate vacancies for employable labour force are responsible for unemployment in developing countries.

However, when the two sectors are adequately blended, unemployment could be reduced but the country is bound to breed open employment. It is not clear that housemaid is being replaced at the instance of gas-cookers, while clerks had lost jobs to modern office machines. Under-utilization of capital investment and over-head cost also contributed to unemployment problem. This under-utilization is more evident in public corporations where lack of competition had considerably hampered efficiency as opined by Lewis.

In every economy, government corporations ought to employ the largest number of employees but regrettably, most unemployed members of the society are not motivated to take up jobs there, because of lack of challenging tasks and self-fulfillment opportunities, he further noted.

Oviawe (2010) blamed the current unemployment on non-functionality of our educational system and discrimination in the choice of jobs by graduates. He mentioned that the country's system of education (6-3-3-4) system, that is, six years in primary school, first three years of junior secondary school, while the other three years is for senior secondary school and at least four years in the university has failed to solve the problems as a result of lack of professionals in the field of technology, agriculture, commerce, all of which could transform the economy into a better position to absorb graduates and other categories of labour. For instance, posting of graduate Engineers to teach in post-primary schools during the youth services (a year constitution and mandatory programme to serve the nation), when they are most needed in project implementations like bridge and road constructions agriculture and technology. He went further to say that the planners of the national education scheme only concentrated on establishing different areas of educational facilities in secondary and post-secondary institutions without adequate and feasibility study into the economy to determine whether the product can be absorbed or not.

Oviawe (2010) further maintained that all that educational system succeeds in doing is to produce end-mass, undesirable number of half-baked graduates who saturate the economy. He stressed the fact that majority of these graduates believe that someone has to talk to the "big man" in an organization before they can secure jobs.

Suggesting strategy for solving unemployment problem in Nigeria, Onah (2001) emphasized that those in authority should aim at deploying labour resources so as to reconstruct the economy. The success of any job creating effort of substantial magnitude should be seen as depending on the government institutions.

Taking a breadth, a step forward and rather than simply viewing unemployment as the counter-state to employment, we model it as a process of search. The success that individuals seeking new jobs will have in finding them depends on two broad kinds of circumstances:

1. The general balance of demand and supply in the labour market, and
2. The match between the searchers' characteristics and those of the available jobs.

There are two broad categories of approaches to explaining movements in unemployment that correspond to these two kinds of circumstances. One approach emphasizes the heterogeneity of workers and jobs. Because every worker and every job has unique characteristics, matching them up through a search process is time consuming. Search models examine the propensity of employers and job searchers to achieve matches and how that propensity varies over time. This approach models the flows of workers and jobs between states: a job match that results in a hire transforms an unemployed worker into an employed worker and a vacant job into an occupied one. To complete the model, one must examine the other labour market flows: job creation and destruction, entry to and exit from the labour force, and the flow of separations of existing workers from their jobs.

In the search approach, natural unemployment fluctuates when there are changes in the efficiency of matching in the economy or in the other flows between labour market states. For example, if structural shifts in the economy make it more difficult to match the characteristics of unemployed workers with those of vacant jobs, then matching will be less efficient and the natural rate of unemployment will increase.

Neoclassical macroeconomic reasoning concludes that because of Walras' Law, if all markets for goods are in equilibrium, the market for labour must also be in equilibrium. Thus, by neoclassical reasoning,

Walras' Law contradicts the Keynesian conclusion that negative excess demand and consequently, involuntary unemployment, may exist in the labour market, even when all markets for goods are in equilibrium. The Keynesian rebuttal is that this neoclassical perspective ignores financial markets, which may experience excess demand (such as a Keynesian liquidity trap) that permits an excess supply of labour and consequently, temporary involuntary unemployment, even if markets for goods are in equilibrium.

Sociological Implications Youth Unemployment in Nigeria

Nigeria as a nation has no doubt seriously underdeveloped the youth population, the consequence of this abject neglect of the Nigerian youths on national security and economic development are best imagined. A trip to all the crannies and corners of the Nigerian cities will reveal the pathetic condition of the youths as a result of systemic disempowerment. To eke out a living therefore, the devil finds useful tools in their hands to unleash their frustration on the general society via hawking vandalized and adulterated petroleum products (South-South), Urchins (area boys) syndrome in Lagos, South-West), while rabbles of militants in the Niger Delta, Boko Haram in Maiduguri (North-East) on the part of the male youth, while the female youths result to prostitution (call-girl) activities and other menial duties, a real life statistics which could serve "better than official statistics in unraveling the extent to which Nigeria has underdeveloped and or disempowered her youthful population arising from pervasive unemployment and poverty in Nigeria" (Onuoha, 2008).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING UNEMPLOYMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

At this juncture, a sociological model is used to shed more light on the nexus of unemployment and development in Nigeria. One of such sociological model that carefully explain the context of unemployment in Nigeria is the theory of surplus value by Marx and Engels (1848) and McLellan (2009). Marx believed that capitalist societies like Nigeria always had and would have high levels of unemployment. He believed such economies went through cycles- periods of expansion in which there was full employment which were followed by periods of crises during which unemployment rose. Recoveries from crises were only temporary. Marx asserted that capitalist economies worked in a way of favouring the few bourgeoisies, capitalist's property class at the expense of the large proletariat, working non-property class. In Marx's assertion:

"It is in the very nature of the capitalist mode of production to overwork some workers while keeping the rest as a reserve army of unemployed paupers". Marx (1848)

According to Marx, unemployment is inherent within the unstable capitalist system and periodic crises of mass unemployment are to be expected. The function of the proletariat within the capitalist system is to provide a "reserve army of labour" that creates downward pressure on wages. This is accomplished by dividing the proletariat into surplus labour (employees) and under-employment and unemployed as well (McLellan 2009). These reserve army of labour fight among themselves for scarce jobs at lower and lower wages. At first glance, unemployment seems inefficient since unemployed workers do not increase profits. However, unemployment is profitable within the global capitalist system because unemployment lowers wages which are costs from the perspective of the owners. From this perspective low wages benefit the system by reducing economic rents but, it does not benefit workers. Capitalist systems unfairly manipulate the market for labour by perpetuating unemployment which lowers labourers' demands for fair wages. Workers are pitted against one another at the service of increasing profits for owners. In Nigeria context, the Nigerian super-rich politicians together with super-rich capitalists formed a cabal and logically established economic imperialism. Economic and social policies formulated by the government are not in any way of benefit to the common Nigerians.

The concept of "*monkey dey work, baboon dey chop*" (shrewd-capitalism) is well pre-eminent in the country (as cited in Alabi, 2014). Workers are living at the mercy of the rich. These have directly and indirectly continue to widen the gap between the rich and the poor. Young people with skills, certificates and energies have nothing to offer as a result of mass unemployment, but dance to the tune of the politicians who in turn used them to manipulate, rig and destabilized elections. In most cases, after they

have been used by their politician, they are dumped or left to face their fate whenever the law catches up with. The few available jobs for the battalion of youth job-seekers are politicized. Unless the job seeker is connected to a political god father he may not get the job. According to Marx, the only way to permanently eliminate unemployment would be to abolish capitalism and the system of forced competition for wages and then shift to a socialist or communist economic system. For contemporary Marxists, the existence of persistent unemployment is proof of the inability of capitalism to ensure full employment.

Hypotheses

This study would be geared towards testing the following null hypotheses. Thus

Hypothesis One

Ho: There is no significant difference between the available jobs and unemployed graduate rate

Hypothesis Two

Ho: There is no significant difference between the structure of the society and graduate unemployment rate

METHODOLOGY

The study area is Akala Street in Mushin Local Government Area of Lagos State, Nigeria. The entire population of unemployed graduate in the study area were examined, the study made use of simple random sampling method in chosen selected respondents. One hundred (100) questionnaires were administered to the selected respondents from the huge number of population. This is meant to reduce cost, time constraint and available fund for the researcher, a self-sponsored funds.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

A thorough and critical analysis of the results on the principal objective of the study and hypotheses. The findings revealed that there is huge youthful population in the study area (within the age bracket 15 – 25 years). Nigeria is endowed with youthful population that is critical for unleashing the creative energies that would sustain national development. However, the youth has been on the margin of national development, owing to worsening unemployment and poverty. The major findings can be subsumed as follows:

- Lack of proper planning by the policy makers is one of the main factors responsible for graduate unemployment
- There is an acute graduate unemployment problem in Akala, Mushin, Lagos State, the study area
- The current educational system did not serve our societal needs as it lacks the basic entrepreneurial techniques
- The refusal by graduate to work in rural areas (where some jobs exists) contributes to graduate unemployment in the study area and Nigeria as a whole.

DISCUSSION OF MAJOR FINDINGS

Majorly, having establish that there is huge population of youth unemployed in the study area. In addition, some graduates dislike working in the rural areas, was revealed in the study, and this contribute to a greater extent to the trend of graduate unemployment problems. The finding of the study also show that our educational system has not been well-planned as to produce professionals in all fields of human endeavors who are capable of employing themselves in their own establishments, such as small business entrepreneurs. Added to this, is that many of the institutions of higher learning are established simply to reduce the teaming population of qualified applicants seeking for admission without proper career counselling or consideration of the needs of society.

Most worrisome report of the study is that, as a result of youth systemic disempowerment and to eke out a leaving therefore, the devil finds useful tools in their hands to unleash their frustration of the general society by engaging in all forms of nefarious activities such as cybercrime, popularly and colloquially known as “yahoo-yahoo”, ritual activities – killing and selling of human body parts either for

“moneybags” or dabble into ritual money ventures, political thugs” – touts, prostitution (call-girl) by the females just to mentioned a few, as coping strategies/mechanisms for survival.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Having established the fact that graduate unemployment exist in Akala, Mushin – the study area. It becomes pertinent at this juncture to recommend some measures that will serve as coping mechanism, which will be of tremendously useful in solving the problems of graduate unemployment. These were gathered based on interactions during the course of the study. They are subsumed as follows:

- Isolation is consider to be a common pitfall of unemployed graduate. The idea of “get out of the house”, find good place to socialize, conduct job search and reach out on a regular basis
- Unemployed graduates should look around community and find worthwhile opportunities to use their skills and talents. This may be a way to gain new skills, engage in networking and keep them active and energized.
- Proper educational and development policies. One of the primary objectives of developmental policy should be aimed at reducing unemployment to the bearest minimum. The educational system should be overhauled to place less emphasis on theoretical education.
- High priority should be assigned to the development of rural areas with a view of attracting more graduates in these places. Also, there should be proper student counselling in choosing careers.

By and large; demographically, in term of population, parent or would be couple should be encouraged to adopt family planning system, bear lesser number of children and a mass campaign of family planning should be vigorously pursued to ensure slim down pollution for the nation as a whole.

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