

Youth Employment, Security and Poverty in Nigeria

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Abstract: This paper seeks to explore the interrelation between youth employment, security and poverty in Nigeria using content analysis. Despite government initiatives or programmes on youth empowerment, there has been increasing issues and challenges with respect to youth empowerment, including youth unemployment, increasing crimes and criminality such as armed robbery, kidnapping, drug abuse, oil theft, banditry, Biafra agitation and Boko Haram menace, among others. No doubt, these issues and challenges have implications for national security in Nigeria. The study analyses the nexus between unemployment/employment and security challenges as well as poverty and security. We conclude that unemployment and high rate of poverty constitute a threat to the security situation of Nigeria. Unemployment leads to poverty, and poverty creates insecurity. It recommended among others that, only good governance can guarantee peace and security in the present-day Nigeria. Government budgetary allocation should be focused on the social and human security rather than physical approach to national security.

Keywords: Youth, Employment, Security, Poverty and Nigeria

I. INTRODUCTION

Youth empowerment initiative through self-employment have been regarded as a means to reduce poverty and enhancing security in Nigeria. Successive governments in Nigeria over the years, have embarked on various youth empowerment/development initiatives designed to empower the youths in the country so as to make them contribute meaningfully to the development of the nation. Some of the youth empowerment initiatives include Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment programme (SURE-P), Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS), Youth Initiative for Sustainable Agriculture in Nigeria (YISA), Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria (YouWIN), National Directorate of Employment (NDE) scheme and N-power.

Despite these initiatives or programmes (and many others not mentioned), there has been increasing issues and challenges with respect to youth empowerment, including youth unemployment, increasing crimes and criminality such as armed robbery, kidnapping, drug abuse, oil theft, banditry, Biafra agitation and Boko Haram menace, among others. No doubt, these issues and challenges have implications for national security in Nigeria. Thus, a lot more still has to be done in the area of youth empowerment to give the youths a bright future to guarantee a safer and secured society.

The potential workers in the labour market have two options: wage/salary employment and self-employment. Wage/salary

employment refer to any salaried or paid job under contract (written or not) to another person, organization or enterprise in both the formal and informal economy while, Self-employment refers to working for oneself rather than working for a specific employer who pays them a salary. Self-employed individuals often act as independent contractors by collaborating with other businesses. Self-employed individuals are more flexible than an individual under wage/salary employment. But an individual would like to choose wage/salary employment over self-employment as the former provides better income than the latter.

However, frictions within the labour market mean that not all wage employment opportunities are always available to all individuals. When individuals realise that they cannot get wage employment easily, they choose self-employment. Nevertheless, the reality with many developing countries is that there are not enough jobs. Consequently, many poor in developing countries resort to self-employment for survival (Fields, 2019; Narita, 2020).

Therefore, self-employment provides income-earning opportunities to the poor and increases their household consumption (synonymous with an increase in income or reduction in poverty). This can be explained using the below notation.

$$c = \alpha \frac{\gamma}{n}$$

Where c donates the per capita of household, γ represents the total household income, n represents the total number of household members and α represents the consumption to income ratio. As poverty depends on the changes in consumption, any changes in α ; γ and n will lead to changes in poverty. Therefore, when individuals are self-employed, γ increases. As γ increases α also will increase, as households spend more on basic needs. That said an increase in γ and α will increase c . Without being self-employed, these individuals have no choice but to remain unemployed, and their household consumption either stays the same or falls. In other words, individuals get trapped in a vicious circle of poverty without self-employment. Therefore, self-employment becomes an essential factor in alleviating poverty in developing countries.

Generally, poverty is viewed as a state of being poor or insufficient income for securing basic needs of goods and services or lack of minimum standard of living. On this basis, the notion of what constitutes 'basic needs' has expanded to

encompass not only food, water, shelter, and clothing, but also access to other assets such as education, basic healthcare, credit, participation in the political process, security and dignity.

Poverty reduction has been embodied in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 1) as a principal development objective (United Nations, 2018; World Bank, 2018), policymakers and development economists in developing countries are confronted with a critical question, how to reduce poverty? According to the UN estimates, in 2018, about 8.6% of the world's population was living below the \$1.90 a day poverty threshold (Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2019). The estimates also suggest that the number of people living in extreme poverty continues to rise in developing countries. While more than half of the extreme poor live in Sub-Saharan Africa Nigeria inclusive. The broader literature in development economics has acknowledged that poverty is mainly due to insufficient earning capacity and limited access to productive wage employment (Rutkowski, 2015). In other words, if people have decent and productive works to do, poverty can be reduced (United Nations, 2018).

Regardless of who is right, Nigeria's poverty profile is embarrassing for a country endowed with enormous human and natural resources. The Nigerian National Bureau of Statistics (2020) reported that 40% or 83 million Nigerians live in poverty. It is estimated that the number of poor people will increase to 90 million, or 45% of the population, in 2022. If the World Bank's income poverty threshold of \$3.20 per day is used, Nigeria's poverty rate is 71%. Compared to lower rates for some oil-producing developing countries like Brazil (9.1%), Mexico (6.5%), Ecuador (9.7%) and Iran (3.1%), this is grim. The Nigerian National Bureau of Statistics data suggest that the number of poor Nigerians exceeds the total population of South Africa, Namibia, Botswana, Lesotho, Mauritius and Switzerland combined. Youth Unemployment Rate in Nigeria increased to 53.40 percent in the fourth quarter of 2020 from 40.80 percent in the second quarter of 2020 (NBS, 2022).

In whatsoever form the challenges or threats to national security manifest in a country the youths, no doubt, play significance and crucial roles in the process. Security of lives and property is the primary responsibility of any responsible and responsive government. As such, most governments take issues of security with all the seriousness it deserves. Security means the state of being free from danger or threat. It is the degree of resistance to or protection from harm. Security also entails absence of fear and violence. Undeniably, more than 70 percent of the foot-soldiers in every crisis situation are very often youths. In Nigeria, the figure could even be well above 70 percent. It is, perhaps, for this reason it's observed that youth empowerment and national security issues and challenges constitute critical concerns to governments the world over. He contended that the more youths are empowered the less national security would be threatened. Thus, to achieve real national security the focus should be genuine youth empowerment and development.

II. NEXUS BETWEEN UNEMPLOYMENT, POVERTY AND SECURITY CHALLENGES IN NIGERIA

2.1 Unemployment/employment and Security

The various security challenges been faced by the country have been attributed to unemployment in many cases. According to the popular maxim, "The idle hand is the devil's workshop"; the situation whereby majority of the people are poor and hungry (poverty) and a lot of youths are jobless and unemployed, will doubtlessly stimulate high insecurity in the country. Globally, there is a general belief that youth empowerment (self-employment) is a necessary tool for achieving real national security. This is particularly true for Nigeria where most of the threats to national security are internally generated and propelled by the youth. To empower the youths means primarily that an enabling environment must be created for their development and self-actualization as articulated by different youth empowerment scheme.

It is now the norm to see thousands of the unemployed turn up in response to advertisement for jobs where only a few or handful is to be employed. The country is faced with a gross abuse and under utilization of human resources with direct impact on national productivity and competitiveness. Thus, unemployment has driven many Nigerians into various activities that constitute a threat to the country's security (Kidnapping, banditry, militancy in the Niger Delta region, pipeline vandalization, prostitution, Boko Haram, Robbery etc.).

There have been instances in which young graduates were arrested for being involved in one form of crime or another. Most of these criminal graduates attribute their involvement in these crimes to the unemployment situation in the country. Furthermore, due to collapse of infrastructures including electricity supply and good road network that is supposed to be taken care of by the government, small and medium scale businesses, which provide employment opportunities for jobless people, are fast eroding. Many artisans such as furniture makers, welders, aluminium window fitters, tailors and so on who cannot afford power generators are today out of work. In desperation, a large chunk of Nigerian youth has taken to riding commercial motorcycles, while others are into street hawking just to keep body and soul together.

The entire world is familiar with what happened thereafter as so many countries are yet to know peace, especially with globalization playing its own part to ensure the spread across national boundaries. Also, recently, as a result of banking reforms witnessed in the country, the banking industry which is one of the highest employers of labour is forced to downsize its workforce, thereby increasing the number of the unemployed. Furthermore, companies and industries like textile industries, steel companies, and the Nigerian Railways are folding up. Private firms that provide employment opportunities for Nigerians are gradually shifting base to other West African countries like Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire, Togo and South Africa. Many manufacturers are experiencing low turnovers in their businesses as they have to contend with

incessant power failure, thus having to rely on generating sets which have to be fuelled at exorbitant cost.

It is unfortunate to see that the approaches of the government to youth empowerment and national security are mutually exclusive rather than being mutually inclusive. In the real sense of it, youth empowerment and national security policy and programmes should be mutually reinforcing to achieve the desired national security outcomes. Glimpse look at the various federal government budget in Nigeria, adequate provisions are made on physical security expenditure while little has been allocated for social and human securities. The pattern of budgetary allocation to youth empowerment and physical security did not change much in the 2016 national budget as demonstrated in the table below:

Table 1: Selected items of 2016 Budget

Items related to Youth Empowerment	Amount Budgeted	Items related to Security	Amount Budgeted
National Job Creation Scheme/Graduate internship	4,000,000,000	National Security Adviser	32,620,000,000
Federal Ministry of Labour & Employment	5,580,000,000	Federal Ministry of Defence	134,577,387,040
Provision for Sustainable Development Goals Programmes	5,378,044,922	Police Formations and Command	17,009,090,000
Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports Development	4,660,000,000		

Source: Odunsi W. (2015) cited in Kalagbor, S. and Harry, D. (2018). 2016 Budget Breakdown

The Table above shows that the federal government allocated N32.6 billion naira to the National Security Adviser alone, while only N4 billion naira was allocated for national job creation scheme and graduate internship and N4.6 billion to youth and sports development. In the same vein, N134.5 billion naira was allocated to Ministry of Defence as against N5.5 billion naira to Ministry of Labour and Employment.

The implication of the above pattern of budgetary allocation is that the government is focused on the physical approach to national security, rather than social and human security for which youth empowerment and development is a critical element. Apparently, if the government had made substantial budgetary provisions to empower the youths, the increasing threats to national security witnessed in the whole country would have been reduced drastically and also decreased the physical deployment of law enforcement agents across the country. In this regard, a lot more still has to be done in the area of youth empowerment to give the youths a bright future to guarantee a safer and secured society.

2.2 Poverty and Security

Today, more than half the world’s population lives on less than \$2 dollars per day, and almost 1.1 billion people live in extreme poverty, defined as less than \$1 dollar per day (Odumosu 1999). Nigeria is the biggest producer of oil in Africa and among the top oil producer in the world but despite its vast resources, it ranks among the poorest countries in the world with most Nigerians living below poverty line. Growing insecurity in Nigeria in recent years has coincided with rising poverty levels as Nigeria now has an estimated 91 million people (43% of its population) living in extreme poverty. Poverty is the reason for insecurity. It is already an established fact that poverty looms in Nigeria and the resultant effects have manifested in the insecurity of lives and property.

A few political classes have used the apparatus of the state to siphon the resources meant for the development of the state to satisfy the private and selfish gains of themselves and their clients. This has created an economy of corruption where the citizens struggle for the remaining resources for their advancement. Sometimes this struggle takes on violent tone which results in the destruction of lives and property.

The poor are led to violence owing to their relative deprivation and needs (Odumosu 1999). This scenario agrees significantly with the current security situation in Nigeria. The act of frustration, denial and lack of want have actuated several of the youths in Nigeria to take up arms against the state.

According to Awaka (2012) as cited by Akwara (2013) more than 80 percent of conflict-related deaths occurred in less economic advantage states. Conflict, violence and insurgency are caused by poverty and other factors that have been inimical to the development of any society Thus, it is obvious that youth empowerment via self-employment reduces poverty and enhancing national security in the country.

III. CONCEPTUAL AND INTUITIVE FRAMEWORK (INTERDEPENDENCE) BETWEEN SELF-EMPLOYMENT, POVERTY AND SECURITY

Figure 1 Shows the causal effect between self-employment, poverty and security

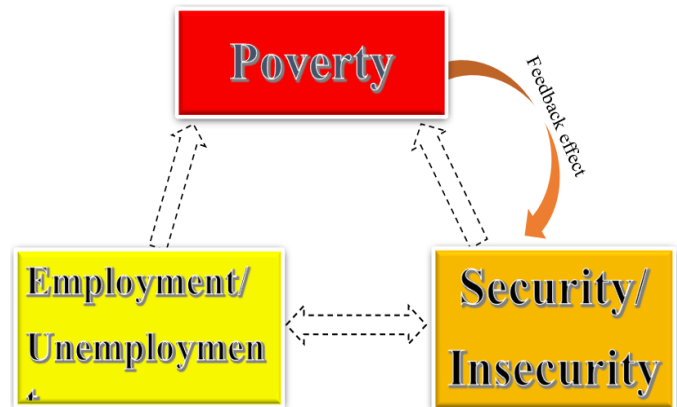


Figure: 1

The framework in the figure 1 shows the interdependent between unemployment/employment, poverty and security.

Employment opportunities reduces the level of poverty and subsequently enhances security in the country. However, High rate of unemployment aggravate poverty and subsequently increases insecurity in the country. The figure also shows the feedback mechanism between security and poverty, security and employment. This means that insecurity causes poverty and poverty causes insecurity.

The theoretical framework adopted for this work is the Marxian/radical suggesting radical changes in the socio-economic system, Marxian economists and other radical theorists highlight the possibility that economic growth alone may be insufficient to lift poor people out of (relative) poverty, because those who belong to certain classes may not reap any of the benefits of overall income growth. Similarly, by emphasizing the concept of class, it provides a shift in perspective, focusing on group (rather than individual) characteristics, with individuals' status considered dependent on the socio-economic environment in which they live (Fearon and David (2003).

Nevertheless, adequacy of income remains a key factor. Within a capitalist system, alleviation of poverty may require minimum wage laws, action to eliminate dual labour markets, and anti-discrimination laws (seen as one of the most effective anti-poverty strategies). The exploitation of the poor by the rich groups in society may also occur via the quality of the environment; for example, the poor tend to suffer most from air pollution (normally generated by the wealthier groups) given their residential location. A further contribution of Marxian/radical economists is the sense that poverty is a moral as well as a technical issue (Esther 2015). This is often lacking in more mainstream economic frameworks, except when they integrate political theories of justice in their analytical framework.

IV. CONCLUSION

The aim of this paper is to investigate the claim that empowering the youth to be self-employed reduces poverty and enhancing security situation in the Nigeria. From existing literature, unemployment and high rate of poverty constitute a threat to the security of Nigeria. Unemployment leads to poverty, and poverty creates insecurity. In sum, the greatest challenge to the security of Nigeria is the army of poor and the unemployed youth. Statistics shows that the present state of unemployment in the country is almost fifty percent, while the national poverty rate is over seventy percent of the population. These have led to a surge in criminal activities in Nigeria.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

First, good governance has been seen as an antidote to poverty and insecurity in Nigeria. Good governance is the panacea to the security challenges bedeviling Nigeria. It is only good governance that can guarantee peace and security in the present-day Nigeria.

Secondly, there is a need for the establishment of more vocational and entrepreneurial training centres across the entire states of the federation.

Moreover, curricula in the higher institutions should be redesigned to capture the current reality of producing job creators and not job seekers.

Nigerians should develop the habit and mind set of self-reliance in order to reduce the rate of unemployment and under employment in the country.

In the same vein government should create conducive business environment.

Finally, government budgetary allocation should be focused on the social and human security rather than physical approach to national security.

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