

## **YOUTHS UNEMPLOYMENT AND INCREASING SOCIAL VICES IN NIGERIA: ENTREPRENEURSHIP AS A PANACEA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Youths are the most active segment of the population and the key players and driver of the economy. The paper looks at youth as a group of people between the ages of 18-35 years. African youths and Nigeria in particular have been hated with the growing rate of unemployment. Some of the social vices perpetuated by the youths include armed robbery, kidnapping, prostitution, gambling, shop looting, vandalism, violent protest amongst others. The growing rate of youth's unemployment in Nigerian has been a bane to socio-economic development of the country. The paper adopts Structural Strain Theory as a framework to the study. The theory is apt to the paper because the growing rate of youth's unemployment is a structural and systemic issue that needs structural review. Therefore, the paper recommends skill acquisition as a panacea to curbing the growing rate of youth's unemployment. The paper recommend further that youths should take a skill in the area of Welding and fabrication, engineering craft practice, Block laying, brick laying and concrete work, Painting and decorating, Plumbing and pipe lifting, Machine wood working, Carpentry and joinery, Furniture making, these will make the youths self-employed and self-sufficient.*

**Keywords:** Youths, unemployment, social vices, entrepreneurship and panacea.

## INTRODUCTION

Youths are the active population in human society and the life wire of every economy in the world when actively engaged. The concept of youth varies from one country to the other. In Nigeria, youths are considered as people between the ages of 18 and 35 years and there are seen as the active segment of the population (Second National Youth Policy Document of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 2009). However, according to the United Nations (2009) youths are seen as persons within the age bracket 15-24 years of age. People aged 25 years and above are therefore referred to as adults in some parts of the world (Awogbenle and Iwuamadi 2010).

Youth population are the active and energetic elements of the society who are overtly or covertly made unproductive and unemployed as a result of the failing economy of Nigeria. Youth unemployment in Nigeria is currently one of the greatest global development challenges facing countries globally and Nigeria in particular. This is because the expression unemployment is always accompanied with social vices. Relating this to Nigeria, more than 60percent of its population currently under the age of 25 are unemployed (Anyanwu, 2014). It can be stress further that in Nigeria, unemployment among the youths is one of the major problems serving

as a bane to the peace and security of the country. The issue of youth's unemployment has become a global phenomenon with penchant effects on youths in developing countries like Nigeria and has braided social vices. According to the World statistics, youth Population stands at 1.2 billion between the ages of 15 and 35 years. From the statistics, about 24.7% of the world's working age population are youths. This shows a great gap between the working youths population and the unemployed youths (International Labour Organization, 2008). Therefore, this has served as an impetus to the growing social vices as an expression of anger and frustration by the youths. The graphic example of youths social vices and expression of anger in Nigeria is the nationwide protest for “#ENDSARS” which was later hijacked by some hoodlums leading to carnage, vandalism and looting of public and private properties in Calabar the capital of Cross River State and other States in Nigeria. Therefore, it can be deduced that Worldwide and Nigeria in particular, youth unemployment is high, almost three times higher than the adult unemployment rate. Hence, social vices will become inevitable. In Sub-Saharan African, youth unemployment rates can be as high as 60%. In Nigeria, the issue of youths' unemployment is so frightening to the extent that the socio-economic and political

improvement is stalled and become a threat to the overall development of Nigeria and her young people. The youth's unemployment and social vices in Nigeria manifest in form of armed robbery, arson, kidnapping, assault, murder, communal crisis, militancy, insurgency, ethno-religious conflict, assassination, carnage, looting, vandalism among others (Jimoh, 2017). Youths unemployment in developing countries especially in Nigeria has contributed to the issue of social vices and human capital flight leading to the dearth of other sectors in the country. Youths unemployment and social vices in Nigeria has reached an alarming level because it has affected all Nigerians and residents of Nigeria as a result of insecurity occasioned by the youth's unemployment. Some of the social vices associated with the menace of youth's unemployment include but not limited to cultism, armed robbery, kidnapping, vandalism among others. Consequently, youths have the proficiency and physical prowess to boost the economy when actively engaged. Youth unemployment no doubt has implications for peace and overall development agenda of any country.

Nedeljkovic (2014), asserted that youth unemployment have a far reaching effects beyond the involvement of youths in social vices, that is psychological,

emotional, economic, health among others. That is, it promotes and increase risk of poverty, social exclusion, low motivation and mental health challenges which sometimes leads to depression. Akwara (2013) also noted that psychologically, the unemployed youths are vulnerable to trauma, anger, frustration, low self-esteem, negative life satisfaction, unhappiness and mental disorder, acute stress among others. Researches have shown that youth unemployment is associated with increase in drug and alcohol use as well as higher levels of crime among young people which is seen as a propelling force to the youth's involvement in social vices in Nigeria (Nedeljkovic 2014). In contemporary Nigeria, unemployed youths are the major threats to peace and security. This is a clear manifestation of the October 24, 2020 nationwide protest by the youths for good governance and '*Endsars*' that was later hijacked by some hoodlums leading to mass vandalization of public and private properties across Nigeria. The phenomenon of youth unemployment in Nigeria has led to an atmosphere of lawlessness, high crime wave, poverty and insecurity of lives and property and thereafter becoming a limiting force to socio-economic development and increasing social vices in Nigeria.

## **OBJECTIVES**

The general objective of the study is to examine youth's unemployment and social vices; Entrepreneurship as a panacea. The other specific objectives are to examine;

1. Youths unemployment and entrepreneurship
2. Social vices and entrepreneurship

## **THEORETICAL DISCOURSE: STRUCTURAL STRAIN THEORY**

Structure Strain Theory was developed by Robert K. Merton (1949). The basic assumption of the theory is that when the goals and the means of goal attainment is not balanced deviance or social vices becomes inevitable. The theory traces the origin of deviance or criminality to tensions caused by the gap between cultural goals and the means people have available to achieve these goals. The structure of the society affects and limit the individual to achieve his/her goal(s) like the desire for gainful employment. From the society, the social strain may arise where the society does not provide adequate guidelines or when the guideline is strain towards achieving the societal and individual goal, the individuals tend to device means of achieving the individual and society goals. Hence, leading to social vices. The social structure of the society designed ways and

approach to attain the goal, but when these becomes difficult, "other" means becomes the possible approach of goal attainment. The relevant of the theory to the work is that society especially the government agencies in connection to the economy and natural resources in the society sometimes come up with policies and programs that will be difficult for the unemployed youths to be gainfully employed. Hence, leading to the growing rate of unemployment. But when people deviate from the set standard, it is because of the strain associated with the law of the society and the deviation has labelled social vices among the youths. The theorist maintained that when an individual is faced with tension, such a person has five ways to adapt and coped with the deprivation these include conformity, innovation, ritualism, retreatism and rebellion. Because of the usefulness of the theory, the paper adopts the theory as a framework to explain the prevailing and growing rate of youth's unemployment in Nigeria which has been seen as a strain to good standard of living and gainful employment.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study used content analysis method to analyzed the data obtained from the secondary sources such as the National Bureau of Statistics. Therefore, the paper adopts qualitative and descriptive research design in analyzing Youths unemployment

and increasing social vices in Nigeria: entrepreneurship as a panacea. Therefore, the study relied on secondary data. In drawing up conclusion for the study, the researchers sourced information from secondary literature ranging from Research reports on Nigerian unemployment rate, social vices and entrepreneurship.

### **Youths unemployment in Nigeria**

Unemployment occurs when a person who is actively searching for employment is unable to find work for over a considerable period of time. Unemployment occurs when people are without jobs and they have actively sought for job within the past four weeks (ILO 2007). Unemployment is often used as a health index of the economy. For instance, in 2022, the growing rate of unemployment in Nigeria estimated at 33% (Jimoh, 2022). It implies that in an economy where the rate of unemployment is high, such economy is at the state of “economic pathology”.

The most frequent measure of unemployment is the unemployment rate which is the number of unemployed people divided by the number of people in the labor force. However, unemployment can either be voluntary or involuntary (Ugwu, 2012). Unemployment rate is the most widely used as an economic indicator of the well-being of the youths and the entire human population in a particular location. According to the International

Labour Organization (ILO, 2017) the indices of unemployment include: if a person is: not working, currently available for work and seeking work. From the economic viewpoint, unemployment is the state or situation whereby those who are qualified, able and will to work do not find a job.

The global rate of unemployment especially in the developing country like Nigeria is becoming alarming. Instance, the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2019) reported that 21.8 million youths are unemployed, 12.4 million worked between 1-19 hours, while 9.4 million young abled youths are under-employed. The rates of unemployment in Nigeria has been on geometric progression among the youths of 15 and 35 years of age (Okafor, 2012). The propensity of youth's unemployment in Nigeria according to the survey of Nigerian Bureau of Statistics varies from one state to another. The survey further revealed that in June, 2020, Imo State reported the highest rate of unemployment in Nigeria with 48.7%, Akwa-Ibom (45.2%), and Rivers (43.7%). Based on the NBS Survey (January- June, 2020), a total of 21,764,618 Nigerians were declared unemployed in Nigeria. This has reached a worrisome dimension in the Nigerian economic and political systems because of the underlying social vices. A similar survey was

conducted by the Labour Force Statistics. Which shows that unemployment rate in Nigeria increased from 23.1% in third quarter of 2019, to 27.1% in second quarter of 2020. The report shows that the number of people in the labour force was estimated at 80,291,894, from this data 58,527,276 were employed at the time of the survey (Okafor, 2011).

The survey shows further that the working-age population (15 – 64 years of age) in the second quarter of 2020 was 116,871,186. The number of persons in the labour force (i.e. people within the ages of 15 -64, who are able and willing to work) was estimated to be 80,291,894. From the statistics, the unemployed youths within the age bracket of 25-35 were highest, with 23,328,460 or 29.1%. The survey shows that women are the highest hit of unemployment in Nigeria with about 12.2 million out of jobs from the 27 million currently unemployed. The research equally shows that graduates and post graduates also suffers the menace of youth's unemployment with 2.9 million postgraduate youths are unemployed. In countries with well-developed social safety nets, youths can afford to wait for suitable or desirable jobs without involvement in social vices but in a country like Nigeria where there is no social safety net scheme, social vices become an "escape route".

Youth unemployment is an important policy issue for many economies and development growth plans. Young men and women today face an increasing uncertainty in their hopes of undergoing a satisfactory transition in the Labour market, and this uncertainty and disillusionment can, in turn, have damaging effects on individuals, communities, economies and society at large leading to the youth's involvement in social vices.

### **Social vices in Nigeria**

Unemployment is an impulse to most social vices in Nigeria, this is because of the old adage that says, "an idle mine is a devil workshop". Some of the social vices include cultism. Cultism is known to have started from the university campus in the early 1950's. Wole Soyinka established the pirate's confraternity at the university of Ibadan to protect the rights of students from their colonial masters (Avidime and Adegbe, 2018). Cultism has been extended to the circular communities outside the university environment whose operation has negatively affected the community economic and social development. It is the violent operation associated with cultism that is seen as a social vice(s) Ogunade (2002). Secret cult is an enclosed group of young men and women who involved in an exclusive secret ideology and secret rites of

passage with initiation, secret signing and symbol, with blood of animals or that of human beings as a ritual sacrifice. This secret society has become pervasive in both urban and rural areas where youths are largely unemployed. Hence, cultism can be seen as a ritual practice by a group of people whose membership, admission, policy and initiation process and their mode of operations are done in secret (Ajayi 2005). Because of joblessness among the youths, the membership of the group is wide spread. Avidime and Adegbe (2018) posited that the negative powers of cult activities manifest in destruction of lives and properties by the unemployed youths.

Hence, the violent operation of this group has equally contributed to the growing rate of unemployment in Nigeria. Nnodim, and Ochogba (2018) observed that the impacts of cult activities hinder economic growth and stagnate development that further creates unemployment. Cultism has been identified as a contributing factor to the falling standard of economy. The destruction of lives and properties during the period of cult clash between fraternity has remained a challenge to the economic development of Nigerian society and has further created unemployment. Equally, armed robbery is one of the common social vices that has been linked to unemployment in Nigeria. The act of stealing started from

the primitive society and has advanced to the stage of armed robbery in contemporary society. Abanyam, Moah, Bauchi Tormusa and Daniel (2013), armed robbery is a social menace that persistently continues to be a challenge to the socio-economic development of Nigerian society which some scholars have argued that one of the motivating forces to armed robbery is the increasing rate of unemployment in Nigeria. Armed robbery is seen as a product of post-civil war since the period of 1970. Therefore, armed robbery is as old as man and been perpetuated in all human society whether industrialized or developing economy. Sociologists believed that armed robbery is a determinant of social factors such as culture conflict, economic competition, social stratification as well as wealth distribution. Hence, the activities of armed robbery have promoted great insecurity and thereby affected the economic growth of the society.

Onimode (2001), revealed that crime like armed robbery occur because of these factors: opportunity to commit crime with impunity, hunger, poor law enforcement, post-conflict access to arms and ammunition, prevalence corruption, social injustice and oppression, mass poverty, greed and quest for materialism and moral decay among others. The high rate of youth's unemployment and other macro-

factor like inflation have promoted armed robbery as a means of survival in the Nigerian economy.

According to Ajayi (2011), armed robbery can be classified into psychotic or normal and professional or amateur. He noted that the psychotic armed robbers are characteristically “hardened” and seen as an expression of frustration arising from joblessness. For instance, the nationwide “#ENDSARS” protest by the youths in Nigeria was seen as an expression of dissatisfaction over governance in Nigeria that has created the atmosphere of unemployment. Hence, it was hijacked by hoodlums which later comes an act of looting, carnage and vandalism. Studies have shown that unemployment has remain one of the leading causes of armed robbery and other social vices in Nigeria and Africa as a whole. As a result of the increasing rate of unemployment in Nigeria among the youths has prompted the youths to embark on vandalism of public and private properties like the oil facilities in most parts of the Niger Delta as a way of expressing dissatisfaction. Infrastructural vandalism has been on the increase in Nigeria and has been a bane to societal development and a nexus to unemployment in Nigeria. Vandalism is commonly found in the oil rich regions of Nigeria and this act is seen by social analyst as social vices. Vandalism is the willful and

malicious destruction of public infrastructure which effectively disrupts the adequate functioning of the facilities and consequently require an emergency repairs response (Ola and Adewale, 2014). Vandalism has created urban and economic deficit because facilities like water supply system, roads, drainages, electricity and pipeline have always been vandalized either by protester or carnages who are sometimes unemployed. Vandalism as wanton and deliberate destruction of public or private property by the masses as a reprisal against policies and programme of the government. Therefore, infrastructural facilities occupied a key place in socio economic development of any country of the world. For Nigeria to achieve her economic development growth plans, there must be adequate protection of infrastructural facilities from the vandals. Because vandalism constitute a serious drain on the government socio-economic development. Other social vices engendered by unemployment include prostitution, kidnapping, operation of baby factories, drug abuse among others.

### **Entrepreneurship as a panacea to youth's unemployment**

Entrepreneurship world over are seen as the catalyst for economic growth and an antidote to unemployment especially among the youths. Entrepreneurship generates growth because it serves as a vehicle for job



creation and employment generation within the economy. Ozioko (2019) defines entrepreneurship as the willingness and ability of an individual to seek out investment opportunities, establish and run an enterprise successfully. Entrepreneurs emerge from the population on demand, and become leaders because they perceive opportunities available and are well-positioned to take advantage of the opportunities through risk taking. As a result of the growing rate of unemployment in Africa and Nigeria inclusive, youth's empowerment and entrepreneurship becomes a panacea to curbing youth's unemployment. Youth empowerment involves the acquisition of skills, ideas and management abilities necessary for job creation by the youths with propensity to making the youths employers of Labour and not job seekers in the failing economy like Nigeria. Therefore, an empowered youth is an entrepreneur who have the skill of promoting and creating employment rather than seeking for an employment. Therefore, youth empowerment could be used as a tool for fighting the Cankerworm of poverty and unemployment in Nigeria. The National Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC), has been one of the leading agencies in youth's empowerment. Some common youth's empowerment programme in Nigeria as a panacea to youth unemployment include: Auto body repair

and spray painting, Auto electrical work, mechanical work, merchandising, Air conditioning, refrigeration, Electrical installation and maintenance work, Radio, TV and electronic servicing. Welding and fabrication engineering, craft practice, Block laying, brick laying and concrete work, Painting and decorating, Plumbing and pipe lifting, Machine, Carpentry and woodwork, Furniture making, catering craft practice, Garment making, Clothing and textile, Dyeing and bleaching, Cosmetology, Photography amongst other youth's empowerment programmes to make the youth employers of labour and revamp the shrinking economic of Nigeria. Ebele (2008) asserted that entrepreneurship as a youth's empowerment strategy is the teaching of knowledge and some practical skills that enables the youths to plan, start and run their own business. Youths empowerment as panacea to youth's unemployment involved human capital development of the youths. Swarland(2008) argued that youth's empowerment is aimed at creating opportunities for innovation, creativity and motivate the youths to transform their ideational knowledge of the economic to practical context of the economy leading to job creation that will make the young people economically independent and self-sustainable in the falling economic like Nigeria.

## CONCLUSION

It is evident that in spite of the abundant natural resources in Africa and Nigeria in particular, there is a growing rate of unemployment among the youths in Nigeria and it is disheartening. The growing rate of youth's unemployment has occasioned the incessant social vices such as kidnapping, armed robbery, militancy, oil bunkering, internet scam, car snatching, prostitution, murder, cultism, abduction, rape, drug trafficking and abuse, among other despicable activities. The growing rate of unemployment among the youths is prior to the discovery of oil in 1970s. At this era, some of the income and employment generating ventures was abandoned. For instance, dearth of Vocational and Technical Education, inattention to agriculture which was the mainstay of the economy, systemic and structural corruption among other pulling factors to youth's unemployment.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The paper recommends that there is need for entrepreneurship education by the Nigerian government to curb the growing rate of youth's unemployment. This is because the youths will become self-employed and self-sufficient. Secondly, youth empowerment will curb the menace of social vices leading to social and economic development. Also, the paper

recommends that the Ministry of Labour and Productivity should review the already existing government employment strategies and poverty reduction approaches to embrace the emerging social vices that are related to the growing rates of youth's unemployment in Nigeria. Equally, youths should come together as one indivisible entity through the formation of co-operative to enable the youths access some government youth's intervention funds and other supports from foreign agencies.

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