

## **Trauma of Unemployment on Nigerians**

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### **Abstract**

Any living religion or government must not only make pronouncements on current human and social problems but must provide solutions as well especially on the trauma of unemployment on Nigeria. Relevant textbooks, journals, personal experiences and observations would be explored to showcase the trauma of unemployment on Nigerians. Consequentialist theory will also be applied to assess the ethical implications. About eighty percent of these young people are either unemployed or underemployed and this makes many observers to predict that the Nigeria youthful population is like a time bomb waiting to be detonated. However, without good monetary policy and fiscal policy, and without good governance and transparency, the Nigeria economy will continue to shrink with high unemployment, poverty and crime. Unemployment is bad because it is the root of poverty, rape of moral culture, corruption, political sychophancy and thuggery, armed robbery and armed conflicts, terrorism and militancy, proliferation of religions and religious economy in Nigeria today.

### **Introduction**

Any living religion or government must not only make pronouncements on current human and social problems but must provide solutions as well especially on the trauma of unemployment, and its ethical implications on Nigeria. In Nigeria, there are several trauma people face in life such as, Trauma of divorce, war, birth, losing a child, abortion, victimization, unemployment, economy, etc. One has to understand the problems facing the educational institutions to really appreciate the magnitude of problems facing Nigeria. Good quality education or 'value education' that involves 'educatin for character', good 'moral values' and civic responsibility shape the character of the people and nations. As Lickona (1992) has noted 'respect and responsibility are the two foundational moral values' that a society should teach its citizens. Others include honesty, fairness, tolerance, prudence, self-discipline, helpfulness, compassion, cooperation, courage (the virtues of Aristotle).

Over sixty percent of Nigeria population is made up of young people below the age of 35 (thirty-five) and government at all levels have not taken serious cognizance of this. Nigeria has the largest army of unemployed and underemployed in Africa.

Human beings have the natural right to free initiative in the economic field and the right to work. There is the right to a working wage, determined according to criteria of justice, and sufficient, therefore, in proportion to the available resources, to give the worker and his family a standard of living in keeping with the dignity of the human person (John XXIII; 1968). It embraces "a wide range of flexible options for work and useful activity, including part-time employment, self-employment, irregular and casual employment, cooperative and community work, do-it-yourself activities and productive leisure as well as full-time employment (Stott, 1990). But full-time employment is the most desired for especially for beginners who are not yet established and do not have all it takes to be self-employed and so on.

### **Conceptual Nature of Unemployment**

Unemployment is the condition of one who is capable of working, actively seeking work, but unable to find any work. It is important to note that to be considered unemployed a person must be an active member of the labour force and in search of remunerative work. Underemployment is the term used to designate the situation of those who are able to find employment only for shorter than normal periods—part-time workers, seasonal workers, or day or casual workers. The term may also describe the condition of workers whose education or training makes them overqualified for their jobs.

Harold (2014) considers unemployment as enforced idleness of wage earners who are able and willing to work but cannot find jobs. In societies in which most people can earn a living only by working for others, being unable to find a job is a serious problem. Because of its human costs in deprivation and a feeling of rejection and personal failure, the extent of unemployment is widely used as a measure of workers' welfare. The proportion of workers unemployed also shows how well a nation's human resources are used and serves as an index of economic activity.

According to [Tejvan Pettinger](#) (2010), Unemployment is defined as a situation where someone of working age is not able to get a job but would like to be in full time employment. Unemployment creates what psychologist refers to as traumatic mind states. Unemployment is also defined by the Bureau of Labor Statistics ([BLS](#)) as people who do not have a job, have actively looked for work in the past four weeks, and are currently available for work. Also, people who were temporarily laid off and are waiting to be called back to that job are included in the *unemployment statistics*.

Unemployment is an important statistic used by the government to gauge the health of the economy. If the unemployment rate gets too high (around 6% or more), the government will try to stimulate the economy and create jobs. It can directly create jobs by hiring employees for public works projects. It can also indirectly create jobs by stimulating demand with extended unemployment benefits. Unemployment benefits (also, depending on the jurisdiction, called unemployment insurance, unemployment compensation or the dole) are social welfare payments made by the State or other authorised bodies to unemployed people (Tejvan, 2010). The benefits include; financial assistance, allowance,

rent assistance, maternity benefits, security benefits and so on. These benefits aid the unemployed until they can find jobs. These are just some of the unemployment solutions the government has at its disposal.

With the exception of infrastructure, unemployment is one of the biggest problems in Nigeria today. Unemployment is the root cause of poverty, youth restiveness, gangsterism, bank robbery, kidnapping, assassination, lawlessness and all sorts of deviant behaviours. Among the bands of unemployed are over three million youths with National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) discharge certificates roaming about searching for jobs that do not exist. Unemployment has maligned many families and debased Nigerian's educational system. Parents are frustrated and traumatised at seeing their children turn to crimes and prostitution because of unemployment. Foreign embassies are jammed with Nigeria youth seeking for visas to get out of the country because of the scourges of unemployment. Jails in Libya, Italy, Thailand, India, etc. are teeming with Nigeria youths who are incarcerated for one crime or the other.

*Daily Independence* (2010) observes that in Nigeria, economic structure, demography and dysfunctional education system we face more grave dangers as a result of unemployment. The authorities in the country going by their estimates underplay the depth of the problem of unemployment and underemployment. According to Bureau of Labor Statistics, 23 % of the employable populations are unemployed while up to 54 % of the youths in the country are either unemployed or under employed. These figures and other statistics do not show the true picture of the situation in the country. Apart from the statistics frequently realized by the Federal Bureau of statistics, unemployment is actually higher. The number of the working population that are not currently engaged and also the rate of those engaged but are not productive is also a cause for concern.

As matter of fact, the social effect of the high rate of unemployment and under-employment is high and cannot be overemphasize. In Nigeria, the high rate of most social evils and crimes (immoral acts) committed by unemployed and under-employed individuals can only be solved when they are engaged. We cannot divorce the terrorism, armed robbery, prostitution and other vices from the high rate of unemployment. The youths and unemployed is a willing tool for those wishing to recruit foot soldiers and adherent to its beliefs. As a result of this, it would be difficult for the government or the society to reduce the rate of terrorism, robbery and other social ills; unless, it provides employment and creates a good environment for the private enterprise to thrive. Creating this environment goes beyond providing the necessary framework for the private sectors to engage in creating industries and other avenues that will absolve the unemployed but ensuring a holistic approach. There are some other social and political issues that can be solved by creating employment in the land. These include corruption, increase immorality and lack of rationality among the population.

The unemployment situation in Nigeria is indeed a time bomb waiting to happen. Our policy makers should have envisaged the high level of crime and criminal activities in the country because of the high rate of unemployment. We would witness even a high rate of social, political and economic upheavals except we address the high rate of unemployment and underemployment. The effect of this in the country would be disastrous and we may be facing a turbulent future in all aspect of the country except we create jobs and engage the

teaming population. In terms of our demography and expanding population this is an urgent need. It is more critical than any other thing that we might be facing now.

### **Causes of Unemployment in Nigeria**

About eighty percent of these young people are either unemployed or underemployed and this makes many observers to predict that the Nigeria youthful population is like a time bomb waiting to be detonated. Nationally, unemployment is caused when the economy slows down, and businesses are forced to cut costs by reducing payroll expenses. Unemployment can also be caused by competition in specific industries or companies. Advanced technology, such as computers or robots, cause unemployment by replacing workers tasks with machines. Inconsistency and unsustainable policies 'microeconomic imbalances' are parts of the causes of the present 'hemorrhage' (Eichengreen, 2004).

Rose-Ackerman, (2004) notes that greater problem facing Nigeria is corruption which contributes to poor governance, low growth and unemployment. Due to Nigeria mentality that public money belongs to the "white man" and that any person who has the access to public fund should convert it into his or her personal use. Although corruption is a global scourge, Nigeria appears the most form of it because the leaders are pathologically corrupt. Everyone appears to believe that the nation has a 'culture of corruption' (Smith, 2008). Over the years, Nigeria has earned huge sum of money from crude oil, which has gone down the sinkhole created by corruption. In an article, Nigeria is describe as a rich nation floating on oil wealth but almost none of it flows to the people neither was it use to build factories or industries whereby creating employment for people and kill trauma of unemployment (San Francisco, 2007).

In Nigeria, the problems of unemployment are a reflection of poor quality of human development and management, because education, which plays a crucial role in human development, economic health of the nation and employment, has been neglected for decades (Krueger & Linghal, 2001; Dike, 2002). When educated youths are unemployed it makes education less attractive to the younger ones. Hence, gainful employment is the attraction to education and if not achieved spells doom to individuals and the society.

Failure of Government and Religious Institutions to Create Jobs in Nigeria have intimidated the citizens into unreserved submission and exploitations while the system has hardened some people to apply every means necessary to meet up with their financial needs. The truth is not that religion has failed but that man has failed to live according to the standards of their various religions. "Just as man as corrupted many good systems in order to achieve his inordinate ambition, he hss often corrupted the demands of his religion for his own ends" (Abogunrin, 1986: 7).

### **Trauma of Unemployment on Nigerians**

The effects of unemployment for the individual are financially, morally and often emotionally destructive. Lickona, (1992); Krueger & Linghal, (2001); Dike, (2002) note that the effects for the economy can also be destructive if unemployment rises above 5-6%. When many people are unemployed, the economy loses one of its key drivers of growth, consumer spending. Quite simply, workers have less money to spend until they find another job. If high

national unemployment continues, it can deepen a recession or even cause a depression. That is because less consumer spending from unemployed workers reduces business revenue, which forces companies to cut more payrolls to reduce their costs. This can become a downward spiral very quickly.

### Unemployed youths (Graduates) in Agbor Delta State 'Crying' for employment



One of the effects of the 2010 economic crisis in Agbor Delta State, Ika North East Local Government Area is as result of protracted unemployment. These *long-term unemployed* have been out of work, and looking, for more than one year. If the unemployment lingers, their job skills may no longer match the requirements of the new jobs being offered. This is called *structural unemployment*. Many of them are 55 or older. They may not be able to get a good job again, despite laws prohibiting age discrimination. They may get part-time or low-paying entry jobs to make ends meet, then become unemployed again and depend on their children thereby subjecting them to child labour or even traffic them for survival. For this reason, many economists think the recession increased the natural rate of unemployment permanently.

The economic impact of unemployment is also huge. A large and sizable percentage of the population is unproductive. This will result in the country capacity being underutilised and preventing it from realising its potential. The number of man power lost by the underemployed is also a big economic disaster. There are plenty of individuals who are employed but are either underutilised or are out rightly wasted in their current employment. Stott (1990: 173) citing William Temples comment on the North of England during depression years that, "The gravest and bitterest injury of their state is not the animal (physical) grievance of hunger or discomfort, nor even the mental grievance of being allowed no opportunity of contributing to the general life and welfare of the community." Obviously, many Nigerians have not had the opportunity to prove their worth nor the society able to exploit their potentials because they have not been given the opportunity to demonstrate their abilities.

Industrial psychologists have likened unemployment to bereavement, the loss of one's job being in some respects similar to the loss of a relative or friend (Stott, 1990). The trauma is in stages. The first stage is shock. The person experiences bitterness, frustrated, rejected, and so on. Unemployment brings tension to their family life. The second stage is depression. Their savings are exhausted and their prospects look increasingly austere. Anxiety and emotional depressions, pessimism and self-defeating syndrome set into the victims' life. The third stage is despair. After years of unemployment the victims are demoralised and dehumanised after disappointment and rejection in their applications.

Rape of individuals' moral culture is likely to occur because when the government could not create an enabling environment for provision and protection of jobs the victims might not be able to uphold their integrity for a long time. The Nigerian society belittles people with low income and those who have no jobs at all. However, the unemployed is politically, religiously, socially, economically, morally irrelevant because one's recognition in the above mentioned depends on the weight of one's purse. "Moreover, the vagaries of man's desires, his short-sightedness, selfishness and struggle for self-preservation militate against a tenacious pursuit of moral purposes" (Abogunrin, 1986: 5).

The consequences and implications of the trauma of unemployment and its ethical implications on Nigeria. In traditional Africa morality was intrinsically linked to the community. "In fact, within the moral thought of traditional Africa, the sole criterion of goodness was welfare, the wellbeing of the community" (Bennaars, 1993:23). In short, the struggle for power dominates the struggle for values, including moral values. No wonder after many years of redundancy, unemployment and poverty the victims seem to lose their moral and religious values in pursuit of wealth and power. A victim of protracted unemployment would not see why he/she should not dance naked to make more money. Or engage in other infamous acts. As Albert Einstein notes that the specific problems facing Nigeria today including the trauma of unemployment cannot be solved at same level of thinking we were at when we created them (Dike, 2002).

### Recommendations

Anticipated solution to the trauma of unemployment in Nigeria is addressing the high rate of unemployment. The Federal Reserve will first step in with *expansionary monetary* policy, and lower the *Federal funds rate*. If this does not work, then the Federal government will use *fiscal policy* (Amadeo, 2014). Though it is not an easy task but there is the need to make a conscious effort to reduce unemployment. Some of the measures needed to address this can be achieved by a change in mind set; diversification of our economic base; infrastructural development; reform in the educational sector; good morality; investment in agriculture and agro based industries and reformation of the informal economy. The leaders appear oblivious of the magnitude of the problems facing Nigeria. Although some of the problems (unemployment inclusive) require common sense solutions, others would involve sophisticated framework of ideas (debate, discussion and decision making).

Agriculture has always been our highest employer of labour and has contributed meaningfully to Nigeria GDP. If we mechanise our agriculture, we will produce more food for our country, more raw materials for our industries and we can also employ more people and cultivate more hectares (Dike, 2003). Massive cultivation and processing of cassava tubers into food and raw materials will also positively engage our unemployed youths and provide meaningful livelihood opportunities for them.

Our educational system needs to be reformed with a focus on practical application of knowledge. It should encourage the adoption of a system that goes side by side with skill acquisition just like the German system. This will encourage any person passing through our educational system

to acquire a skill that with adequate preparation the graduate may be gainfully employed. The system should encourage competence and skills. Our educational system should also empower the guidance counseling unit to make sure youths are encouraged to identify their interest and skills nurtured to ensure students pursue their careers. It is a welcome development about the introduction of entrepreneurial studies. This will encourage students to learn the act of entrepreneurship and how to set up private businesses. With this, it would help reduce the high level of unemployment and also increase the general economic well-being of the country and that of the individuals and help promote the small and medium scale enterprise which is the engine room of any economy.

The government should also establish a mechanism to support and provide soft loans to aspiring entrepreneurs. People may argue that they are government agencies saddled with this but they should be a robust means of accessing the loans and punishment to defaulters that have made it impossible for the loans to be sustainable. The regulators should start performing their statutory functions well. Some other areas of the economy that needs urgent attention to help bridge the unemployment gap include the services sector and most especially the Tourism sector. The liberalisation of the telecom sector brought with it a massive economic drive and boost. Some aspect of the tourism sector that would give the country a boost is the area of cultural tourism. This sector has the capacity to contribute to the economic growth and reduction of unemployment and as well as eliminating unethical behaviour which might be caused by unemployment.

Remove job discrimination and restrictions on entry into the various trades and professions. We cannot expect people to have the incentive to get an education, or acquire a skill, if they cannot have access to employment later on. Poverty cannot be abolished if people are not permitted to escape from it.

Our religious institutions and leaders should change from exploiting and extorting money from their members and think of how to establish them by creating jobs with adequate remunerations to alleviate their sufferings and again be able to pay dues and levies to the institutions.

### **Conclusion**

However, without good monetary policy and fiscal policy, and without good governance and transparency, the Nigeria economy will continue to shrink with high unemployment, poverty and crime. People have a crucial role to play in meeting the challenges facing Nigeria; they should become politically educated so as to make political leaders to listen and act right. Moreover, positively moral pluralism encourages a common search for consensus, for a publicly accepted morality, for what has been called 'a common ground morality' (Bennaars, 1993).

In the greater game of life we must know the direction in which the greatest good is to be found (Titus, 1957). Hence adequate employment gives pleasure and happiness, restores value and dignity because there is dignity in labour. Nigerians need to change attitudes towards the unemployed. The great majority of unemployed people want to work, but cannot find a job. They are victims of recession, new technology and irresponsible leaderships.

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