

## **Re-Examining the Twin Concepts of Unemployment and Insecurity in COVID-19 Era: A Nigerian Perspective**

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### **Abstract**

This paper is an examination of the phenomenon of unemployment and its impact on insecurity in Nigeria, especially during COVID-19 era. The researchers employed descriptive and qualitative analysis of data obtained from secondary sources, including published textbooks, journals, and other internet materials relevant to the topic. The researchers posited that unemployment and insecurity are interwoven. Thus, high incidence of unemployment promotes insecurity, just as the latter amplifies the former. They argued that COVID-19 pandemic has increased unemployment which resulted to high incidence of insecurity in Nigeria. The researchers, therefore, offered recommendations including the need to effectively stem the tide of general unemployment for security stability in Nigeria to effectively achieve socio-economic development of the country.

**Keywords:** Coronavirus, Criminogenic Behaviour, Employment, Security, Socio-Economic Development

### **Introduction**

Coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) popularly known as COVID-19 pandemic is a novel disease which has defied certain medication. It is a contagious disease with symptoms of sore throat, fever, dry cough, difficulty in breathing, muscle aches, headache, diarrhea, runny nose, and tiredness which may appear within fourteen days of facial contact with infected person or group (Ajibo, 2020; Ozili, 2020). According to medical experts, the disease can be prevented through regular washing

of hands with soap under running water, using of alcohol-based sanitiser, maintenance of social distance of not less than two (2) metres, wearing of facemask in public, not touching one's face, coughing into elbow, staying at home, and seeking medical attention early when the symptoms occur (Ajibo, 2020). Ozili & Arun (2020) argue that Convid-19 pandemic posed a far-reaching effect on the global economy. The pandemic has posed a serious threat on Nigerian socio-economic wellbeing, as it affected many socio-economic activities resulting to unemployment with its attendant consequences (Ajibo, 2020).

Nigeria is blessed with abundant human and natural resources, but unfortunately, the country is fast becoming the world's Headquarters of poverty occasioned with mass unemployment. The unprecedented coronavirus is fast contributing to the worsening of unemployment in Nigeria with its attendant consequences on security stability. According to Nwankwo (2014), the menace of unemployment is geometrically increasing in Nigeria which result to criminogenic behaviours, especially among youth thereby worsening insecurity in the country.

COVID-19 outbreak in Nigeria had worsen unemployment situation in the country. It led to stoppage of economic activities from taking place in many parts of Nigerian society where total lockdown and social distance policies were enforced due to fear of contracting the disease (Ozili, 2020). This economic downturn result to unemployment as many companies had either stopped some of their workers or restrict others to work from home for fear of spreading the virus. The situation compounded insecurity in Nigeria, as it forces many people, especially the youth to substance abuse; and predisposing them to other criminal behaviours, such as thuggery, hooliganism, armed robbery and hire assassin (Haruna, Namadi, Dangiwa, Zamfara & Dunkrah, 2018; Makinde & Adegami, 2019). It is considering the above background that this paper unravels the nexus between unemployment and insecurity, and their worsening implications in Nigeria amidst coronavirus pandemics.

### **Conceptual Clarifications**

There is need to explain the following concepts based on their usage in this paper for the purpose of clarity:

#### **Coronavirus**

Coronavirus is popularly known as COVID-19 pandemic. It is a respiratory virus emerged in Wuhan, Hubei province of China, spreading to most countries of the world through physical contact (Aarun, 2020; Ajibo, 2020). Its outbreak in Nigeria affected the citizenry. Thus, the lockdown occasioned by COVID-19 pandemic caused unprecedented socio-economic meltdown on Nigeria and her citizens, since people were restricted from going out to look for their daily bread due to fear of spreading the virus.

#### **Unemployment**

Unemployment is a condition of joblessness and/or inability of a person or group of persons to get appropriate paid job or self-employed. It is an economic condition where people, who are fit and available to work cannot get themselves a suitable job (Adesina, 2013).

#### **Employment**

Employment is an antithesis of unemployment. It occurs when able-bodied men and women, who are willing and able to work gainfully get their heart-desired job.

### **Insecurity**

Insecurity in the context of this paper refers to absence of protection of lives and property of inhabitants of a state or nation. It implies lack of safety atmosphere for socio-economic development of a country which impoverish the citizenry.

### **Security**

Security as a concept has many individual ideological and intellectual perspectives. In other words, the phenomenon of security varies from one context to another, as it cuts across food, health, socio-economic, emotional, environmental, personal, community and territorial security. According to Albert (2012), security implies both military and non-military conceptions. The military concept includes protection of a nation from internal and external aggression, while the non-military conception otherwise known as human security include guaranteeing citizen's safety, human rights, ensuring individuals' opportunities to actualise their potentials, and freedom from any direct and indirect physical and psychological harm or threats.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This paper is anchored on socio-psychological perspective of frustration-aggression theory. The theory is traced to the work of Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mowrer & Sears (1939). The basis assumption of the theory is that aggression is always occurring due to frustration (Radda, 2010). This means that people tend to become frustrated when they are not able to meet their desires. According Bartol & Bartol (2005), when behaviour directed at a specific goal is blocked, the individual becomes frustration, which tends to induce aggression. This suggests that people who employ violence to reduce frustration will, under extreme frustration, become more vigorous than usual, possibly even resorting to killing (Bartol & Bartol, 2005).

According Haruna & Iyaji (2019), unemployment has the tendency of frustration, and frustration generated because of thwarted expectation leads to violent behaviour resulting to insecurity. Thus, the insecurity threats, such as kidnapping, farmer-herders conflict, armed robbery, banditry, thuggery, hire assassin, and other criminogenic behaviours are frustration-induced. The insecurity threat creates unsafe environment favourable for socio-economic activities which result to unemployment for paid work, and/or self-employment for entrepreneurs. Furthermore, increasing rate of unemployment, especially among youth is time bomb for insecurity. Thus, unemployment brings out frustration, which tends to compel people, especially youth to engage in deviant and criminal behaviours, including abduction, kidnapping, and extremism like *Boko Haram* insurgence. Onouha (2014) argues that recruitment into the *Boko Haram* terrorism is basically drawn from disgruntled youth, jobless high school, and university graduates, and pauperised children, predominantly from the North and other parts of Nigerian society. The socio-economic backwardness of the northern part of Nigeria in terms of socio-economic development occasioned by unemployment is a fertile ground for the radicalisation of the youth resulting to insecurity of lives and property in the region.

### **Review of Empirical Literature**

There are many studies conducted on unemployment and insecurity in Nigeria. Wayas, Selvadurai & Awang (2019) conducted a study titled "an examination of the causes of unemployment among youths in Nigeria." The researchers found that security challenges in

Nigeria is a major factor for unemployment among youth, since a proportion of business ventures have gone into extinction because of insecurity thereby increasing the rate of employees becoming jobless. The study concluded that unemployment among youths indeed posed a serious barrier to the growth of numerous countries of the world, including Nigeria.

Adegoke (2015) study titled “youth unemployment and security challenges in Nigeria” unravels the impact of unemployment on security challenges in the country. The study found that increasing rate of unemployment has far-reaching consequences on security stability. Thus, it found that the increasing rate of crime and other violent behaviours in many parts of Nigerian society are causal factor of unemployment. The researcher concluded that unemployment, especially among youth in Nigeria is a menace and constitute a real danger to socio-economic and political development of the country.

Nwankwo (2014) conducted a study titled “impact of unemployment on Nigerian economic development: a study of selected Local Government Areas in Anambra State, Nigeria.” The study found that unemployment impedes the Nigerian economic growth and development, and this has affected her efforts in achieving its objectives. It also found that unemployment if not effectively tackled will continue to deprive Nigeria of actualising her vision and this will raise the level of poverty, crime, violence, inflation and above all reduce country’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The researcher concluded that the consequences of growing unemployment rate are such damning that no economy can afford to despise. Thus, policy makers and economic managers alike need to aptly combat the menace.

### **Methodology**

The researchers utilised descriptive research method aimed at describing the twin concepts of unemployment and insecurity in COVID-19 era. The materials for the research were obtained from secondary sources of data. These include materials obtained from relevant textbooks, journals and other materials from internet sources. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data generated.

### **Linking Unemployment and Insecurity in COVID-19 Era**

Unemployment and insecurity are two sides of the same coin. They are interwoven. Insecurity is a causal factor of unemployment, as the latter is to the former, especially among youth (Haruna & Iyaji, 2019). Thus, unemployment tends to amplify or influence insecurity. According to Adesina (2013), unemployment occurs when there is a change in the structure of an industry or the economic activities of a country (structural unemployment). It occurs when an individual is out of his/her current job and looking for another job (frictional unemployment), or due to seasonal variations in the activities of industries caused by climatic changes, changes in fashions or by the inherent nature of such industries (seasonal unemployment). It also occurs when there is economic meltdown (cyclical unemployment), or occasioned by personal factors, such as old age, physical or mental disability, poor work attitudes and inadequate training (residual unemployment). Furthermore, unemployment occurs usually when individuals are bent on getting their preferred job considered more rewarding than the existing ones (voluntary unemployment), and when a person is not having enough paid job or not doing work that makes full use of his or her potentials (disguised unemployment).

According to Ebobo (2016), unemployment is largely responsible to the prevalence of security challenges, including armed robbery, insurgency, and ethno-religious violence, among others in many states of Nigeria. Thus, high incidence of unemployment promotes insecurity, just as the latter amplifies the former. COVID-19 pandemic has increased unemployment which is a causal factor of insecurity in Nigeria. The pandemic has caused both structural and frictional unemployment in Nigeria. Ozili (2020) observes that the lockdown imposed on the movement of people in many countries like Nigeria led to massive losses for business in the event industry, entertainment industry, banking industry, hospitality industry and sport industry thereby compounding the unemployment situation in the country which invariably amplify criminogenic behaviours. Bintube (2020) asserts that there are cases of burglary and theft, domestic violence, and unrest in some communities by group of youth, who hitherto were engaged either as taxi drivers, motorcycle or tricycle riders, and daily paid jobs due to lockdown imposition occasioned by COVID-19 pandemic; the unemployment situation of able-bodied men and women, who are willing and capable to work predisposing them to criminogenic behaviours, including substance abuse.

Namadi & Haruna (2016) observe that unemployment result to youth's criminogenic behaviours since the idle mind is the devil's workshop. This connotes Ikelegbe (2006) and Haruna (2013) position that unemployment causes anger and frustration which result to negative orientations. The contemporary violence in many parts of Nigerian society is due to unprecedented socio-economic conditions of Nigerians relating to survival, economic deprivation in the wake of coronavirus (Okoli & Nachanaa, 2016). This situation is a fertile ground for socio-economic insecurity. The struggle for survival occasioned by unemployment, especially among youth influences varying forms of criminogenic behaviours including kidnapping, armed robbery, farmer-herder conflict, insurgency, and other violent activities (Evans & Kelikume, 2019).

### **Implications of Unemployment and Insecurity in Nigeria**

Unemployment is a threat to security stability of any nation. Thus, unemployment and insecurity pose serious threat to both Nigerians and the economy of the nation in significant proportion. Adesina (2013) observes that unemployment has driven many Nigerians into various activities that constitute a threat to the country's security stability. He asserts that many companies and industries in security threaten parts of Nigerian society are folding up. Thus, private firms that would have provide employment opportunities for Nigerians are gradually shifting base to other West African countries like Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire, Togo, and South Africa, etc. (Adesina, 2013; Ikelegbe, 2016).

According to Otache (2020), many people in many spheres of national economy have lost their jobs because of the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has worsened the unemployment situation in Nigeria. For instance, the unemployment rate in Nigeria before the pandemic stood at 23.1 percent (NBS, 2018; NCDC, 2019; CSEA, 2019; NSEG, 2019; NBS, 2019). However, due to coronavirus outbreak occasioned by lockdown, the unemployment rate rose to between 33 and more percent (Obiezu, 2020). Otache (2020) argues that coronavirus has affected the production and marketing of agricultural products thereby worsening food insecurity in Nigeria. The demand and supply chains of agricultural products and foods internally and externally have been affected because of the measures adopted to contain the spread of the disease. This is because many farmers find it difficult to obtain seedlings, fertilizers, pesticides,

and farming tools. Also, labour-intensive agricultural production processes which is the cornerstone of agrarian economy in Nigeria have been affected due to labour shortages occasioned by logistical constraints (Otache, 2020).

### **Conclusion**

Insecurity and unemployment are on the high side in Nigerian society. COVID-19 pandemic has further increased the rate of unemployment which is a causal factor of rising insecurity in Nigeria. Thus, without socio-economic stability at the individual and societal levels there can be no guarantee of lasting peace. The absent of peaceful atmosphere compromised unemployment which further hampered security stability of any country like Nigeria.

### **Recommendations**

The researchers offered the following recommendations:

1. Governments should effectively stem the tide of general unemployment occasioned by COVID-19 pandemic for security stability in many parts of Nigerian society to effectively achieve socio-economic development of the country.
2. The Nigerian governments at all levels should assist the youth to acquire the requisite skills and aptitude needed to be self-reliant rather waiting for white-collar jobs that may hardly be secured.
3. Well-to-do individuals and groups should help to train the unemployed in vocational studies and provide the needed start-up-capital to established small-scale enterprises for self-reliance. This may curtail idleness among unemployed youth which predisposes them to criminogenic and violent behaviours for insecurity.

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