

YOUTHS UNEMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL EXCLUSION AND CHALLENGES OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The paper contributes to academic debates on the phenomena of youths unemployment, social exclusion and their threats to sustainable development in Nigeria. The paper starts on the premise that the unemployment among able-bodied and skilled youths is on the increase in Nigeria. The unemployed youths are exposed to exclusion as majority of them are denied of engaging in meaningful productive activities that can enhance their contribution at household, community, and national levels. Consequently, the victims of unemployment developed sense of marginalization, alienation and frustration. It is further argued that the problem of youths unemployment with its antecedent social exclusion are capable of breeding violence, thuggery, armed robbery, and general instability in the country. The identified problems among others create greater challenges for sustainable development in Nigeria. In terms of methodology, relevant literatures and secondary data were examined to understand the subject matter. The paper therefore recommends that effective policies must be put in place by various governments and stakeholders to reduce/eradicate the scourge of youth's unemployment to enhance sustainable development in Nigeria.

Key words: Youths unemployment, exclusion, victims, instability and sustainable development

Introduction

Unemployment is a global trend, but it occurs mostly in developing countries of the world (Nigeria inclusive), with attendant social, economic, political, and psychological consequences. Youth unemployment in many countries is currently a growing phenomenon. According to the figures released by the ILO in May 2012, 12.7 per cent of the global youth labor force was unemployed in 2012. If we take into account the global numbers, there will be nearly 75 million unemployed youth aged 15 to

24 in 2012. This constitutes an increase of nearly 4 million since 2007 (Caruso and Gavrilova, 2012). For instance, during that period (2007), the Middle East and North Africa were the regions with the highest unemployment rate in the world at 12.2 percent, followed by sub-Saharan Africa at nearly 10 percent. East Asia's unemployment rate of 3.6 percent remained the lowest. The report affirmed that population growth, especially in South Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa, and Sub-Saharan Africa, was

putting a lot of pressure on job creation (Okafor, 2011).

According to Adepegba (2011), Nigeria has a youth population of 80 million, representing 60% of the total population with a growth rate of 2.6% per year and the national demography suggests that the youth population remains vibrant with an average annual entrant to the labour force is 1.8 million between 2006 and 2011. Yet, majority of the youth has been either unemployed or under-employed between 2006 and 2011. The overall unemployment rose from 12.3% of Labour force to 23.9% (Awogbenle and Iwuamadi, 2010). The large number of youths who are unemployed is capable of undermining democratic practice, as they constitute a serious threat if engaged by the political class for clandestine activities. The problem of chronic youth unemployment is very evident in Nigeria. Every year thousands of graduates are trained from various institutions of learning, for whom there are no enough jobs for them. The self-employed are in quandary as scant infrastructure makes it impossible for them to ply their trade (Adepegba, 2011).

According to Obateru (1994), poverty accounts for the bulk of violence due to unemployment, inadequate housing, and poor physical and social infrastructures. The poor state of the Nigerian economy must have worsened the situation of youth rendering the youths idle and instruments of manipulation by the elites for ethno- religious and political insurrections. Unemployment has also been categorized as one of the serious impediments to economic progress. Apart from primarily encouraging the development of street youths and area boys who were denied of legitimate means of livelihood to grow up in a culture that encourages criminal behaviors; it represents a colossal waste of a country's manpower

resources. In addition, it generates loss of welfare in terms of lower output thereby leading to lower income and poor well-being (Akinboyo, 1987; and Raheem, 1993). Vandemoortele, (1991), Rama, (1998) Oladeji, (1994) and Umo (1996) found that unemployment has serious negative implications on the economies of Africa and Nigeria in particularly.

Youth employment is a crucial issue in Nigeria because the youth constitute a major part of the labour force and they have innovative ideas, which among other factors are important in the development process of the country. A large proportion of the youths however are unemployed. The negative consequences include psychological problems of frustration, depression, hostility and gradual drift of some visible unemployed youths into all manner of criminal behaviour (Adebayo, 1999; Egbuna, 2001).

Based on the arguments above, the authors assert that exclusion of Nigerian youths attributed to the prevalence of unemployment is a great challenge to sustainable development in the country. Against this background, the paper is divided into six sections. Following immediately is the conceptual definitions. The third part examines the unemployment situation in Nigeria while in section four; the paper examines the theoretical nexus between youth unemployment and social exclusion. The fifth segment x-rays the implications of youth unemployment, social exclusion on sustainable development in Nigeria. The sixth section is the concluding remarks.

Importantly, Data for this paper were derived from mainly secondary sources including research and analysis of scholars, government records, newspapers and journal articles related to the subject matter. It also involved extensive literature review on the topic.

Conceptual Definitions of Youth unemployment, Social exclusion and Sustainable Development

Youth unemployment

According to Briggs (1973), unemployment is the difference between the amounts of labour employed at current wage levels and working conditions and the amount of labour hired at these levels. The International Labour Organization (ILO) defines the unemployed as numbers of the economically active population, who are without work but available for and seeking for work, including people who have lost their jobs and those who voluntarily left work (World Bank, 1998: 63). Youth unemployment, can be described as the conglomerate of youths with diverse background, willing and able to work, but cannot find any. When the supply of labor outstrips the demand for labor, it causes joblessness and unemployment (Echebiri, 2005; Gibb and George, 1990; Onah, 2001; Okafor, 2011). In addition, for Adebayo (1999) unemployment exists when members of the labor force wish to work but cannot get jobs.

Various forms of unemployment have been identified and elaborated upon in the literature. These include seasonal, frictional, cyclical, and structural unemployment (Adebayo, 1999; Damachi, 2001; Hollister and Goldstein, 1994; Robert, 1993; Todaro, 1992). Unemployment is measured among people in the labor force (Obadan and Odusola, 2001; National Bureau of Statistics, 2010). The labor force of a country as defined by National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) (2009) is a set of people or citizens of a country who are willing and are able to make available at any given point in time their efforts for gainful employment. The unemployed are the individuals with no

work, but are looking for work at the time of any study (Okafor, 2011).

Social Exclusion

Social exclusion has been defined in a number of different ways, which may include all or some of the following elements. These include disadvantage in relation to certain norms of social, economic or political activity pertaining to individuals, households, spatial areas or population groups; the social, economic and institutional processes through which disadvantage comes about; and the outcomes or consequences for individuals, groups or communities. The following, quite comprehensive, definition comes from the European Commission:

Social exclusion refers to the multiple and changing factors resulting in people being excluded from the normal exchanges, practices and rights of modern society. Poverty is one of the most obvious factors, but social exclusion also refers to inadequate rights in housing, education, health and access to services. It affects individuals and groups, particularly in urban and rural areas, who are in some way subject to discrimination or segregation; and it emphasizes the weaknesses in the social infrastructure and the risk of allowing a two-tier society to become established by default (Commission of the European Communities 1993: 1).

Barry (2002) contends that the effect of social exclusion can be observed at a national level. He further argues that social solidarity and shared identity is lost through social exclusion as it reduces the shared experiences of the populace. He also points out that individuals or groups are socially excluded if they are denied the opportunity of participation, whether they actually desire to participate or not, such as in South

Africa during the years of apartheid. In other words, beyond income and material resources, social exclusion encompasses those who are limited because of a diverse range of barriers. These include discrimination, lack of local job opportunities, low skills, chronic ill health, fear of crime, lack of available childcare, geographical location, cultural identification, isolation within their community, disaffecting interest in mainstream education and alienation from political process (Burchardt et al, 2002; Eistadtadt and Witcher, 1998; Gaffron et al, 2001; Scottish Social Inclusion Strategy Action Team, 1999).

Sustainable Development

Defining development to capture the diverse views of divergent scholars remains much a challenge and a contested issue, yet one truism about the concept is that, it is a relative term. What constitutes development in one part of the world may not hold in terms of value and meaning in another part of the world. Contested, as it is yet Todaro and Smith, (2005: 826) see development as the process of improving the quality of human lives. To these scholars, three equally important aspects of development are:

- (1) Raising people's living levels- their incomes and consumption levels of food, medical services, education, etc., through relevant economic growth processes;
- (2) Creating conditions conducive to the growth of people's self-esteem through the establishment of social, political, and economic systems and institutions that promote human dignity and respect; and

- (3) Increasing people's freedom by enlarging the range of their choice variable, by increasing varieties of consumers' goods and services.

Development encompasses growth and embraces the quality of life such as social justice, equality of opportunity for all citizens, equitable distribution of income and the democratization of development processes. It is the capacity of members of the society to actualize them by participating actively in the social engineering of their destiny. It entails the ability of individuals to influence and manipulate the forces of nature for their enhancement and that of humanity. Contributing to this discussion, Onimajesin (2011) argues that sustainable development is a pattern of resource use that aims to meet human needs while preserving the environment so that these needs can be met not only in the present, but also for generations to come.

The understanding that sustainable development encompasses a number of areas is very true (political and moral inclusive) but the three most essential elements are; economic, environmental, and social equity; and hence they are often referred to as the Sustainable Development Triangle (Daud and Nor Azam, 2011). Economic sustainability has to do with sound macro-economic management, poverty alleviating growth, appropriate agricultural policies, role of the state, and cost internalization. Sustainable social development is concerned with equity in the distribution of wealth, resources and opportunity to all citizens at all levels and it implies amongst other things access to minimum standards of security, human rights, social benefits including food, health, education, shelter and opportunities for self-development.

Environmental sustainability on the other hand deals with environmental protection and thus it requires the use of environmental goods and services in such a way that their productive capacities are not reduced, nor their overall contribution to human well-being diminished (Ite, 2003). According to Hasna (2007), sustainability is a process, which tells us of a development of all aspects of human life affecting the various competing goals, and involves the simultaneous pursuit of economic prosperity, environmental quality and social equity.

Drawing from the illustrations above, it is argued that youth unemployment and social exclusion are paradox to sustainable development in Nigeria. For comprehensive understanding of the subject matter, it is imperative to examine the unemployment situation in Nigeria.

Unemployment situation in Nigeria

Analyzing Nigeria's socio-economic environment for instance, the social cost implicit in economic decline which became manifest as from 1970 onward generated multiplicity of negative effects on group interaction and social stability/relationships. Starting from the mid 1981, the world oil market began to collapse and caused serious economic crisis for Nigeria economy (Anyanwu, et al 1997). The collapse of world oil prices and the sharp decline in petroleum output, the latter resulting from a lowering of Nigeria's OPEC quota in the early 1980s, brought to the forefront the precarious nature of the country's economic and financial positions. Rising and ill-directed government spending during the 1970s, neglect of the agricultural sector, and inward-looking industrial policies left Nigeria vulnerable to profound changes in the external environment in the following

decade. Thus, the dramatic fall in oil export revenues entailed a sharp deterioration in the country's public finances and balance of payments. This led to recession and economic deterioration as manifested by fiscal crisis, foreign exchange shortage, balance of payments and debt crisis, high rate of unemployment, negative economic growth, to mention a few. Indeed, beginning from 1982, and through 1984, the country had become saddled with negative trends in economic growth as indicated by the decline in the gross domestic product (GDP) (0.35% in 1982; - 5.37% in 1983; and -5.18% in 1984), persistent current account and budget deficits, a huge backlog of uncompleted projects, especially in the public sector, factory closures, large-scale retrenchment, acute shortages of essential commodities and galloping inflation. According to the Central Bank of Nigeria (2003) cited in Akintoye (2003), the national unemployment rate, rose from 4.3 percent in 1970 to 6.4 percent in 1980. The high rate of unemployment observed in 1980 was attributed largely to depression in the Nigerian economy during the late 1970s. Specifically, the economic downturn led to the implementation of stabilization measures, which included restriction on exports, which caused import dependency of most Nigerian manufacturing enterprises, which in turn resulted in Operation of many companies below their installed capacity. This development led to the close down of many industries while the survived few were forced to retrench a large proportion of their workforce, furthermore, the Nigerian Government also placed an embargo on employment.

Apart from the problem of poverty and unemployment generated because of recession, it equally triggered chains of value displacement.

The administrative response to the bedeviled economy got to its climax when structural adjustment programme (SAP) was introduced in July 1986. The core objective of the economic structural reform is a total restructuring of the Nigerian economy in the face of a massive population explosion. However, these economic and financial structural reforms put in place did not yield significant results. Specifically, total number of workers disengage from the Federal Civil Service rose from 2, 724 in 1980 to 6,294 in 1984 (Odusola, 2001). Owing to this, the national unemployment rate fluctuated around 6.0% until 1987 when it rose to 7.0 percent. It is important to state here, that SAP adopted in 1986, had serious implications on employment in Nigeria, as unemployment rate declined from 7.0 percent in 1987, to as low as 1.9 percent in 1995, after which it rose to 2.8 percent in 1996, and hovered between 2.8 and 13.1 percent between 1996 and 2000. According to Oruwari (2006), the introduction of Structural Adjustment Programme further intensified the existing social degeneration and caused untoward hardship for majority of youth in Nigeria. Following the introduction of SAP, the country started experiencing a serious contraction in the labour market. This resulted in a large proportion of urban youths, both in-situ and migrants, searching for jobs under the prevailing harsh economic conditions (Oruwari, 2006).

Further unemployment problem was generated as a result of Nigeria's political crisis following the annulment of 1993 presidential election. This crisis increased the de-investment of foreign capital and equally occasioned the closure of significant industrial infrastructure. Ironically, as the economic sector of Nigeria is experiencing an acute downturn, the labour market was experiencing an unabated increment in employable segment of the

national population. Considering the development that affected unemployment between 1999 to 2004, the promulgation of Decree 28 of 1999 (Public Enterprises Privatization and Commercialization Decree) which signalled the second round of privatization and commercialization further intensified the problem of unemployment in Nigeria. Thirty-six public enterprises were listed for either total de-investment or divestment of government interest. In its impact for unemployment, significant portion of Nigeria labour force was affected either by retrenchment or lay-off since the affected enterprises embarked on restructuring and repositioning. The third phase of privatization targets the monopoly sectors thus affecting energy, petroleum and telecommunication sub-sectors of Nigeria's economy (Jegede and Idowu, undated). According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2009:238; 2010:2; 2012), the national unemployment rates for Nigeria between 2000 and 2011 showed that the number of unemployed persons constituted 31.1% in 2000 and it reduced to 11.9% in 2005 but again increased to 23.9% in 2011.

In Nigeria, the lack of job prospects and the likelihood of a desolate future for unemployed youths have contributed to socially deviant behaviours such as prostitution, armed robbery, kidnapping for ransoms, drugs and so on. Crime and violence have been increasing in many parts of Nigeria among unemployed young people. Graduate unemployment has occasioned sophisticated crimes and social vices of alarming dimensions, leading to palpable security conundrum, manifested in youth restiveness, cultism in schools, unprecedented wave of armed robbery, drug addiction and the attendant mental derangement, etc (Gyamfi, 2006) . In Nigeria also, the emergence of youth activism, radicalism, cultism and an

under-class of street urchins (area boys/girls), touts and prostitutes are manifestations of unemployment (Adisa, 1997). In addition, the youth frustration has been directed at and tended towards deviance, delinquency, crime and violence. In a study conducted by Ikelegbe (2006), it was documented that poverty and unemployment are responsible for the militia-ization of youths in the Niger-Delta region of Nigeria. The study buttressed further that:

“.....when 80% of our youths are unemployed,” “the harsh conditions have become unbearable,” “when those marginalized are now hungry, they brazenly resort to violence.” But beyond these seeming altruistic factors are the roles of politicians and opinion leaders. The militia phenomenon is to some extent a creation of political, ethnic and community leaders, who encourage, sponsor and control the militia groups for some political and personal objectives. The primary objective of the militia and militia activities is the struggle against marginalization and injustice, the emancipation and survival of the Ijaw nation and the Niger Delta and the promotion of ethnic interests in terms of welfare (Ikelegbe, 2006; 95-96).

In order to understand the nexus between youth unemployment and social exclusion, it is necessary to back up the arguments with a theoretical framework. Thus, the next section will situate the discussion with deprivation theory.

Theoretical orientations; towards a nexus between youth unemployment and social exclusion

The paper utilizes relative deprivation theory as a theoretical framework to establish the relationship between youth unemployment, social exclusion and sustainable development. Dollard et al propounded this theory in 1939.

Other contributors include Davies (1952), Feierabend and Feierabend (1966), Robert Gurr (1970) and Lea and Young (1984). The theory was propounded as part of efforts to link socio-political and economic inequalities in the society to rebellions and insurrections. As individual and group- based theory of aggression, the relative deprivation theory argues that when expectation outstrips achievement regardless of the absolute levels of economic consumption or the provision of political rights, frustration is generated. Thus, the collective frustration turns to anger and violence (Dollard et al, 1939:52, Davies, 1962:44, Feierabend and Feierabend, 1966:89). Ted Robert Gurr in 1970 contributed to the discourse of the deprivation theory in his work titled; *Why Men Rebel*. He argued that instead of an absolute standard of deprivation, a gap between expected and achieved welfare creates collective discontent. This theory also applies to individuals who find their own welfare to be inferior to that of others to whom they compare themselves. Gurr explains violence in all ramifications as the result of collective discontent caused by a sense of relative deprivation. He writes, “Relative deprivation’ is the term... used to denote the tension that develops from a discrepancy between the “ought” and the “is” of collective value satisfaction, and that disposes men to violence.” This gap between an individual's expected and achieved welfare results in collective discontent.

Lea and Young (1984) build on the evidence that the causes of poverty and inequality are embedded in the structures of social systems and relationships – in exclusionary process – and not in individual inadequacies. The core argument of the theory is that youth will often develop a sense of deprivation when there are noticeable

or measurable gaps in access to socio-economic resources vis-à-vis other group and when their needs for socio-economic identity and worth are not met. Lea and Young opine that it is not the fact that of being deprived as such, but the feeling of deprivation of which is important. Campbell (1993) locates youth problems in decline experienced in manufacturing employment and because of lack of opportunity in the youth labour market. By extension, the prevalent of unemployment among youth is a classical evidence of exclusion as an unemployed individual could said to have been suffering from self-alienation, alienation from family, group(s) and the entire society. Consequently, the feeling of alienation can lead to frustration and loss of hope in the entire social structures. Those who feel frustrated therefore may plan to revolt against the society, thereby encouraging violence and other forms of social vices in the society.

Different components of social exclusion influence each other, thus creating a spiral of insecurity, which ends in multiple deprivations. Deprivation usually begins with the loss of employment, which in turn leads to a significant degradation in living standards, that is, increased risk of poverty. Living in poverty creates additional difficulties in the search for employment and contributes to a long-term unemployment trap for many individuals. At the same time, unemployment and poverty inhibit participation in social activities. Due to the lack of money and to the stigmatization that can be caused by unemployment, social ties are weakened, increasing the probability of social isolation. If the period of unemployment, and consequently poverty, is prolonged, tensions will occur in the family and in marital relations. The lack of money worsens not only family relations but also ties with friends, neighbours, and relatives, since 'social exchange' is necessary for the maintenance of

social relations. In turn, the social isolation has an adverse effect on employment, since the individuals concerned are isolated from sources of information and lack the support needed for employment search.

Similarly, the contribution of poverty to the young people in Nigeria can be appreciated by considering major indicators explaining deprivation within the environment. It is very clear that in an environment characterized by acute unemployment, poverty, squalor and crisis dominate. Farrington *et al* (1986) argues that young people living in area of multiple deprivations are more likely to engage in amoral behaviours. Youth unemployment is closely related with criminality (Farrington, 1990). Fitzgerald (1993) also holds that young people from working class families with higher levels of deprivations caused by unemployment are likely to experiment with their identity in order to meet up in an excruciating environment. In the words of Adebayo (1999) and Egbuna, (2001) unemployment leads to psychological problems of frustration, depression, hostility and criminal behaviors. In corroborating this opinion, Echebiri (2005) stressed that youth unemployment primarily encourages the development of street youths and area boys who were denied of legitimate means of livelihood to grow up in a culture that encourages criminal behaviors. Chigunta, (2002), supported this argument. According to him, the unemployed youths survive by engaging in various activities such as petty trading, casual work, borrowing, stealing, pick pocketing, prostitution, toutting and other illegal activities. Some have become drunkards and others are on drugs such as cocaine and Indian hemp. Bennel (2000) in line with Chigunta, (2002) argued that urban society is becoming increasingly criminalized, especially with the proliferation of youth gangs. Several studies including Igbinovia, (1988) have shown

that majority of prison inmates are youth aged 30 years and below who have no jobs. In addition, delinquency, crime and drug abuse are on the increase among youths because of the unemployment crisis.

The implication of the scenario above is that the Nigerian youth, especially those suffering from unemployment scourge can be described as a social category in crisis. They are characterized as excluded, marginalized, threatened, victimized, abused, problematic, frustrated and violent. The anger, frustration and bitterness resulting from the multifarious crises and the ensuing negative orientations are compounded by their constituting a large pool that is amenable to all sorts of manipulations by political, cultural and other elites and the fact that they can easily transform their bitterness and frustration into violence. In the circumstance, it is not surprising that the youths have turned against the society and specifically against the public and corporate governance and other objects of their marginalization and frustration.

In political terms, the youth represents a contradiction of weakness and power. There is at the same time, powerlessness, dependency and a search for relevance and space in an adult, elite dominated terrain amidst a youth power underlined by the huge potential for political action, rebellion and subversion (O'Brien, 1996; Durham, 2000). When the concept of youth is viewed in terms of claims to power and power sharing, then what emerges is, in relation to the adult category, a contestation between privilege and mass action, autonomy and dependency, caution and non-restraint and establishment and counter-hegemony. It is in this perspective that the political definition and utility of youth has been undertaken in which the youth becomes populist, radical and oppositional. It is this appropriation of youth identity in power

terms that also underlines the youth activism and militancy in political and resource struggles as well as their manipulation or utilization in succession and power struggles.

Impacts of youth unemployment on sustainable development in Nigeria

Globally, unemployment and underemployment among youth constitute serious problems, which expose youth to indulge in violent acts. The problem of violent crimes in Nigeria has been exacerbated by the high rate of unemployment and economic hardship, which has pushed many jobless youths some of whom are graduates into various deadly crimes (Edward, 2011). 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. For instance, the cover story of The News Magazine (26 September 2011) cited in Adesina (2013) was captioned "*Graduate Bandits on the Prowl*". According to the report, most of the graduate robbers that were interviewed argued that they took to crime for want of job. In addition, survey conducted by Awogbenle and Iwuamadi (2010) indicate that armed militant groups in Nigeria namely Bakassi Boys, O'odua Peoples Congress (OPC) and Egbesu Boys were made up of youths within 16 - 17 years (40%), 18 – 19 years (10%), 20 - 21 years (20%), and 20 – 23 years (20%). They concluded that approximately 60% of them were unemployed. Furthermore, an empirical survey of Children and Youth in Organized Armed Violence in Nigeria, reported that disenchantment and frustration of young people due to mass poverty and unemployment, has increased the number of aggrieved youths and resulted in

the emergence of “area boys” and Almajiris who target the very society that alienated them (Ibrahim, 2006). By extension, the increase in both the frequency and intensity of bank robberies is an outcome of unemployment and glaring social inequalities.

Unemployment problem, which now seems beyond remedy, has produced army of idle hands and some of them have decided to punish the society that fails to provide them with means of livelihood and dignity by robbing its members of their property at gunpoint (Ideyi, 2005). Bennel (2000) argued that urban society is becoming increasingly criminalized, especially with the proliferation of youth gangs. Neither homes, nor markets are safe in Nigeria because of frequent occurrence of armed robbery incidents. The police cannot perform effectively because they are overstretched by the amount of cases that awaits them daily, and is worsened by outdated instruments they use that are no match to the modern sophisticated weapons used by the criminals. The Research Director of the Nigerian Economic Summit Group (NESG), revealed that:

“The increasing poverty in Nigeria is accompanied by increasing unemployment. Unemployment is higher in the north than in the south. Mix this situation with radical Islam, which promises a better life for martyrs, and you can understand the growing violence in the north. Government statistics show that the northern states have the highest proportion of uneducated persons. If you link a lack of education and attendant lack of opportunities to a high male youth population, you can imagine that some areas are actually a breeding ground for terrorism” (Oxford Research Group, 2012).

The increase in criminality in a country because of youth unemployment causes

losses in foreign direct investment (FDI). For example, foreign investors cited crime as the biggest deterrent to investing in South Africa. In Nigeria, oil giant Royal Dutch/Shell is threatening to direct from Nigeria, citing insecurity as one of the major reasons (Salami, 2011). It is pointed out that as long as unemployment persists in Nigeria, the decrease in economic growth and development will continue to remain High rates of youth unemployment also represent a wasted resource for developing economies like Nigeria. This in its turn will result in the increase of the greater problems of survival. This will have its impact on sickness and death. Unemployment will be a strain on the economy of the entire region (Oshinubi, 2006) as there is lower output because of rising unemployment. This leads to lower standards of living. This will cause a considerable increase in the cost of living. As a result, many Nigerians will find it difficult to survive and this will further lead to the decrease in economic development (Ifeanyi, 2007).

Kidnappings are on the increase across Nigeria and the unemployed youths view the business as lucrative. The unemployed youths are available for recruitment by politicians to indulge in violent acts capable of destabilizing the society. For instance, in the Northern part of Nigeria, both politicians and religious groups manipulate the unemployed youths to take part in the acts of terrorism ravaging the region. In the South West of Nigeria, they find easy employment in petty criminal activities. The culture must at least accept, if not approve, violent action as a means to an end. This could be the reason why suicide bombing is exclusive to the Northern part of the country as violence is encouraged by some Islamic sects. The dramatic rise of youth unemployment is likely to constitute the

fundamental engine of political violence and terrorism.

Contributing to this discussion, Oshiomole (2004) posits that when people have no jobs, they are deprived of the capacity to earn steady real income and cannot live a socially productive existence. He further remarked that:

“Because of the absence of decent jobs, many of our youth are compelled to live indecent lives, sometimes as hardened and violent criminals or just thugs available to be rented as assassins or drafted into ethnic and communal clashes. Therefore, many of our youths rather than being assets to the nation have now become a source of its insecurity” (Oshiomole, 2004:3).

From the analysis and arguments above, it can be deduced that in an atmosphere especially in Nigeria, where youths are not gainfully employed, such context prepares avenue for the affected youth to divert their attention to other perceived lucrative activities, such as criminal acts and other social vices. The acts further divert public and government attention to dispense their energies and resources to the management of negative consequences of the youth unemployment. This occurs at the expense of effective formulation of developmental policies and programmes capable of taking the country to a greater level. When the youth who are suppose to partake in the developmental process are socially excluded from partaking by being unemployed, how then do we want to have sustainable development in Nigeria? Therefore, the prevalence of youth unemployment and social exclusion are obstacles to sustainable development in Nigeria.

Concluding Remarks

The paper examined the prevalence of youth unemployment, social exclusion and challenges of sustainable development in Nigeria where the literatures have shown that the phenomenon in context have capacity to distort the quest for sustainable development in the country. The rise of youth unemployment will make socio-economic and political environment hostile, unstable, insecure and unsafe. Without jobs, many youth especially young men, will not be able to play a useful role in society. Some members of this group may turn to escapism through drugs and alcohol. Others migrate to urban areas in an attempt to remake themselves in an anonymous setting. In areas of political and social fragility, others will achieve adulthood by joining rebel groups or armed militant gangs. Thus, high youth unemployment in Nigeria represents lost potential for national economic transformation, and high numbers of economically frustrated youth may contribute to social instability.

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