

# Demography And Unemployment In Nigeria: A Geographical Perspective

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## Abstract

Basically, everything is connected to demography. This study investigates the impact of demography on the prevailing unemployment situation in Nigeria with the specific objectives being to: identify the causes of changing demography in Nigeria, highlight the causes of unemployment in Nigeria, underscore rural-urban differentials in unemployment rate, discuss the impact of unemployment on the economy, highlight the role of government in tackling rapid population growth and unemployment issues in Nigeria, and to make recommendations based on the findings. Data were sourced mainly from secondary sources and the research adopted the Marxist theory of unemployment as the theoretical framework. To achieve a systematic assessment of the Impact of demography on unemployment in Nigeria, the research method of content analysis was employed. The study identified the causes of demographic change to include, high fertility rate, increasing rural –urban migration cum urbanization, and the causes of unemployment to include Nigerian educational structure which lays less emphasis on technical and vocational education, declining economic growth rate, unsuitable economic policies, neglect of agriculture and corruption among others. The study also found that changing demography and the consequent unemployment rate has a geographic dimension, deferring substantially between the rural and the urban segment of the country. The study recommended among others, a more effective and stricter implementations of population policies to reduce population growth rate and also rural development programs that will help reduce the population pressure and unemployment burden in both urban and rural areas.

**Keywords:** Demography; Unemployment; Rural; Urban; Nigeria.

## Introduction

At the global scale, rapid population growth and unemployment especially among the youths has become a matter of serious concern particularly in the developing segments of the world. The magnitude also varies geographically between the rural and the urban areas because of the varying demography of the duo settlement types. According to the National Bureau of Statistics' report, unemployment rate in Nigeria rose from 27.1 percent to 33.3 percent from December 2020

to March 2021 (Egwuatu et al 2021). Nigeria's current unemployment situation is becoming alarming such that a huge percentage of educated, able and qualified citizens cannot secure paid employment. This is attributable to the country's prevalent socioeconomic situation. Nigeria deteriorated to this precarious height of unemployment due to variables like; lack of population control and disproportionate delivery of unskilled labour among others (Obialor 2019). Population explosion that stems from failure to regulate birth and migration overwhelms the

economy in addition to the economy's incapacity to create functional employment that can always absorb the excess labour supply. High unemployment rate has orchestrated urban problems in the form of increased crime rate, arm robbery; kidnapping, traffic and housing congestions etcetera (Obialor 2019; Egwuatu et al 2021).

As a way of stating the research problem, it suffice to say that population rise and unemployment is a global phenomenon, however it is more prevalent in most developing countries of the world, with the attendant social, economic, political and psychological consequences. As it relates to Nigeria, unemployment is presented as the ratio of labour force that are willing and able to work but did not work in the week prior to the survey time for at least 39 hours (Obialor 2019; NBS 2020). It is obvious that population growth exert considerable pressure on available resources and facilities, job opportunities inclusive (Olele, et al 2021; Egwuatu et al 2021). This is even more pronounced where population is exceptionally dense as it occurs in the metropolitan areas (Aigbokhan, 1988; Kuralbayeva, 2018) It is against this background that this research paper intends to examine the link between demography and unemployment with the specific objectives being to: identify the causes of changing demography in Nigeria; identify the causes of unemployment; highlight the rural-urban differentials in unemployment rate; discuss unemployment's impact on the economy; highlight the role of government in tackling rapid population growth and unemployment issues in Nigeria; and to make recommendations based on the findings.

### **Theoretical framework**

This article hinges on the Marxist Theory of Unemployment as propounded by famous scholar, Karl Marx in mid-nineteenth century. Marx theory posits that unemployment will continue to be on the high increase as population increases (Marx 1956). This is because increase in population will lead to increase in manpower supply which triggers unemployment. Karl Marx in his theory considered unemployment as unavoidable within the unbalanced capitalist

system. Capitalism according to Marx, unduly and fraudulently influences the labour market by extending unemployment which depresses labourers' demand for fair wages. Workers compete with one another with the intent of increasing profits for their employers. In Karl Marx pose, the only approach to enduringly stamp out unemployment would be to abolish capitalism and the scheme of compulsory rivalry for wages, and then giving in to the socialist or communist economic system. (Furth et al, 1978)

### **Material and methods**

The study took up a descriptive approach. Data for a systematic assessment of the Impact of demography on unemployment in Nigeria were sourced basically from secondary sources. Textual materials were methodically and extensively reviewed and content analysis was employed for analyzing the facts obtained.

### **Meaning of unemployment**

Unemployment is described as a condition in which persons skillful and willing to take up jobs are unable to find suitable paid employment. Unemployment also portends the share of the labor force that is currently without work but are available and looking for employment, while the customary definition of unemployed persons refers to those without work, in search of work in a recent past period, and at this time available for work, including individuals who lost their jobs or those who have intentionally left work (ILO 2021; World Bank Group 2022). Economists have categorized between the numerous overlapping types of unemployment, these are: seasonal unemployment, structural unemployment, frictional unemployment, transitional unemployment, hidden unemployment, classical unemployment, Search unemployment and voluntary unemployment among others (Obialor 2019, NBS 2020).

### **Demography and unemployment**

Fundamentally, most socioeconomic and environmental issues are connected to demography. This ranges from migration to urbanization, unemployment, terrorism, environmental degradation, etcetera (Weeks

2012). According to NBS (2020), the entire Nigeria's population is alienated into two categories; labour force (currently active) and non-labour force (currently inactive). Changing demography and particularly that of age structure, a high urbanization rate, and a faster rate of population growth in relation to economic growth are major drivers of unemployment situation in many countries of the world. Over the years, Africa's population (Nigeria's inclusive) has got younger, principally due to high birth rate with serious implication for provision of employment for the teeming youths (Obialor 2019)

### **Causes of demographic change in Nigeria**

According to a UNESCO (2016) report, the different demographic drivers and their effects in terms of population changes have considerable implications for socio economic situations. Population of Nigeria is increasing rapidly owing to the effects of birth rate, death rate and higher net migration. Although migration's role in the overall Nigerian population increase is insignificant, however, it accounts greatly for the spatial distribution of population between the rural and the urban areas in the country. Nigeria derives its population increase mostly from high birth rate which is currently as high as 37 per 1000 live birth with a Total Fertility Rate of 5.5 births per woman (NBS 2016; Simona 2021). The implication is that, if population increase arises from increase in birth rate, a larger percentage of the population will be young people, mostly children (Weeks 2012). If population increase is brought about by higher net migration, there will be a preponderance of people within the working age group (15-64) with serious implication for provision of employment just as it obtains in Nigerian metropolitan areas. Increasing population especially that of youths without commensurate socio-economic development is inimical to people's well being and engenders serious unemployment situation. This is because increasing population will generate increase in manpower (labour force). Currently, statistics revealed that 53.77% of the full population of Nigeria belonged to age group 15 – 64 (O'Neil 2021).

The causes of high birthrate in Nigeria include a number of medical, demographic and socio cultural factors (religion, superstitions and customs). Improved medical facilities and services, better drugs and immunization services have helped in the achievement of a relative reduction in infant, child, maternal and adult mortality rate which has further induced high birth rate. Early marriage especially in the northern segment, and perceiving children as insurance against old age equally encourage high birth rate. Many religions and customs also allow polygyny and preach against family planning.

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

Although the traditional theories of unemployment provided a basis for comprehending causes of unemployment in an economy, however as it concerns Nigeria, the underlying premise of these theories may not fully reveal the major factors of Nigeria's unemployment issues. In contemporary times, a number of factors have been recognized to be accountable for the problem. These factors include declining economic growth rate, implementation of disjointed economic policy, erroneous impression about technical and vocational education and the neglect of agriculture (Obialor 2019; Olele, et al 2021; Egwuatu et al 2021). In addition, corruption, poor management practice, infrastructural decay, absence of enabling business environment, internal migration particularly in rural-urban trajectory and rapid population growth have also been identified as causes of unemployment in Nigeria (Emeh, 2012)

Eradicating high unemployment rate in Nigerian will require a giant stride towards industrialization, enhancing our agricultural sector with a view of making it more attractive to the youths, rural development schemes to stem the tide of rural-urban movement and the restructuring of our educational system to make our youthful population employment creators rather than job seekers. Furthermore, having good development plans and relevant economic policies, encouragement of geographical mobility of labour and strict adoption of population control measures since optimum population

enables a nation's resources to go round its population, will serve as panacea to unemployment (Obialor 2019).

### **Rural-urban differentials in unemployment rate**

Unemployment rate is the share of persons that do not have job among all economically active (employed and unemployed) persons of a certain age group, it is calculated as the percentage of persons in the labour force who do not have any form of work to do, i.e Unemployment Rate =  $100 \times (\text{Unemployed Population}) / (\text{Labor Force Population})$  (NBS, 2020; ILO 2021)

USDA (2019) in their summary of trends in rural versus urban labor markets, noted that rural unemployment stood at 4.2 percent in 2018, slightly above the rate of 3.9 percent for urban counties. Kuralbayeva (2018) highlighted lower wage rate in the nonmetropolitan areas which of course can lead to rural urban migration resulting high unemployment rate in the metropolitan area.

According to Aigbokhan (1988), urban unemployment in Nigeria has been attributed largely to rural-urban migration which has been taking place in the country since the 1960s and at a faster rate in subsequent decades. The fact is that Nigeria is more of an agrarian economy, but there is already a breakdown of the rural economy owing to insecurity and other factors in diverse parts of the country, particularly in the north which worsened the country's unemployment rate and further induced rural urban migration (Egwuatu et al 2021).

Urban unemployment is hinged on failure on the part of Nigerian government to implement policies that reflect commitment to providing employment opportunities while applying economic policies that encourage rural-urban imbalance in the pattern of distribution of public investment expenditures and the wages determination method which focuses more on the urban area. These have contributed to the wide differentials in urban-rural income. As migration progresses in the urban direction, the urban industrial sector has only absorbed a negligible proportion of migrants thereby inducing

unemployment in the urban area. There is therefore the need for economic policies that will enhance rural income and thereby reducing the rural-urban income gap (Aigbokhan 1988).

In a survey conducted by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) in 2020, it was reported that Nigeria's unemployment rate ascended to 33.3% in the fourth quarter of 2020 from 27.1% recorded in the second quarter of 2020. It also related that rural unemployment rate was 28%, while urban unemployment rate stood at 25.4%. As touching underemployment, rural dwellers registered a rate of 31.5%, while the urban dwellers recorded 23.2% (NBS 2020).

As posited by O'Neil (2021), unemployment rate in Nigeria in 2020 exhibited much discrepancy between the urban and rural areas. While unemployment rate among rural dwellers stood at 34.5% in 2020, urban dwellers had a rate of 31.3%. Underemployment among rural dwellers also declined to 26.9% from 31.5%, while that of urban dwellers decreased to 16.2% from 23.2%. From the foregoing, it can be concluded that unemployment rate is higher in the rural area compared to the urban segment (Aigbokhan 1988; USDA 2019; O'Neil 2021; NBS 2020)

### **Impact of Unemployment on the economy**

The impact of unemployment in an economy robs on the government, firms and the unemployed people themselves (Todaro and Smith 2011; Obialor 2019).

On the part of the government, the first impact is seen in Fewer Tax Revenues. This is because fewer people are actually working indicating intangible tax revenue for the government (NBS 2020).

The second effect of unemployment on the government is the attendant lower economic growth as fewer people have jobs, firms will not be able to produce as many goods and services which could have boosted the GDP. This will invariably impact government's finances negatively (Oye et al 2011)

Thirdly, higher welfare costs will result as the unemployed people will also be claiming benefits

without contributing to government revenue through taxation, this will constitute a drain on the government finances. Finally, Higher Supply Cost especially the one required to train the unemployed people for requisite skills so as to make them employable in a modern economy (Obialor 2019).

On firms, the impact features in: larger pool of labour which lead to lower wage costs, less demand for goods and services, increase in demand for inferior goods and higher training costs as more resources will be expended on training new employees because they have been out of work for so long (Obialor 2019).

The impact on the People can be visualized from the angle of lower standard of living due to loss of income. Loss of skill also emerges because the longer someone stays unemployed the less employable they will be to firms and they may also become depressed and lose confidence in their ability (Egwuatu et al 2021).

### **Government's efforts in tackling population growth in Nigeria**

The first serious efforts to influence the population variables was made in 1988 when the Government enacted the Nigeria Policy on Population for Unity, Progress and self-reliance. It demonstrated government rising concern about family planning as part of general socio-economic development of the country. In addition to this, another policy tagged "Nigeria Policy on Population for Sustainable Development" was introduced by president Olusegun Obasanjo Administration in 2003 and signed in January 2004 (NDHS 2013). Despite the two policies intended to check population growth, the Nigerian population keeps growing rapidly such that the rate of growth in 2006 (3.2 percent) exceeded that of 1991 (2.82 percent), thereby attesting to the fact that the policies have little or no influence on the citizens' reproductive behaviour (FRNS Official Gazette 2009; NDHS 2013). The factors that limited the effectiveness of these policies include among others, its voluntary nature as there is no penalty for defaulters (Ebigbola 1988). Couples will merely be encouraged to have the number of children they can provide for. The policy advocated four

children per woman probably to accommodate those in polygamous marriages which is predominant in Muslim dominated states, where it is believed that Islam permits a man to marry more than one wife

### **Government's efforts in tackling Unemployment in Nigeria**

To tackle the dilemma of unemployment, Nigerian government have been putting in place some measures and programmes since the 1960s. Different administrations have introduced different programmes aimed at addressing the menace of unemployment (Obialor 2019; NBS 2020). Notable among these programmes, aside the national policy on education enacted in 1977 which introduced vocational courses into Nigeria's educational curriculum with a view to counter the effects of the educational system Nigeria inherited from her colonial master which prepare people for office work rather than being job creators are programmes such as : Community Bank, Directorate for Food, Road and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI), People's bank, Better Life for Rural Women, Family Support Programme, National Directorate of Employment (NDE) etc.

The Establishment of NDE in 1986 was directed at promoting skills acquisition; facilitating the character of ingenuity and creativity, self-reliance and independence. The vocational skills' training is still thriving as many centres have been established to empower people to be self reliant. The scope of operation of NDE covers: Youth employment and Vocational skills development programme; Special public works; Small scale industries, graduate employment programme, and Agricultural development programme. The agricultural programme aims at generating employment for school leavers, graduates and non-graduates alike in the Agricultural sector, with a focus on self employment in agricultural production and marketing (Aigbokhan 1988; Omonijo 2013; NDHS 2018; Achonu 2021). However, Paucity of fund at the federal levels among others have limited the effectiveness of the NDE agricultural programmes.

More recent ones are the social and welfare programmes for the unemployed and less privileged rolled out by President Muhammadu Buhari since he assumed office in 2015. They include: N-Power programme, Conditional Cash Transfer Scheme (CCTS), Special Public Works (SPW), Youth Employment Action Plan (NIYEAP 2021-2024) programme among others (Odewale (2021)). All these were designed to curb manifestations of poverty due to unemployment. While these programmes are well intentioned and might have achieved some measure of successes, however, that unemployment rate rose from 27.1% in the second quarter of 2020 to 33.3% in last quarter of the same year (NBS 2020) indicates that the programmes lack a sustainable positive effect on the overall unemployment situation in the Country

### Conclusion

This research article has examined the impact of demography on unemployment in Nigeria. It is safe to conclude that the current rate of population growth and the age structure coupled with low levels of socio economic developments presents a viable occasion for unemployment to thrive. Although many programmes have been developed to curb this menace, many of such programmes lacks sustainable lasting effect just as the population also keep growing. Therefore there is the need enforce both population and economic policies that will help attain optimum population on the one hand and bring lasting solution to the problem of unemployment in Nigerian, rather than the schemes for periodic empowerment interventions that the nation has been projecting in recent times.

### Recommendation

The paper recommends the intensification of the inclusion of pre-vocational courses in Nigerian educational curriculum, encouragement of entrepreneurship, effective and strict implementations of population policies that will reduce growth rate and economic policies that will reduce rural-urban income disparity so as to achieve a sustainable unemployment reduction.

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