

Youth Unemployment and the role of the Church

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Introduction:

According to Obadan and Odusola (2000:1) productivity and employment are two issues that are central to the social and economic life of every country. Therefore, unemployment is a vicious circle that explains the endemic nature of poverty in developing countries. Yet, Ogoh-Mesarawon (2009: n.p) posits that a World Bank study has shown that one out of every five adults in Nigeria is unemployed and just one out of every ten university graduates gets a job. In another skew of the picture, Ezeani (2009: 2) observes that the latest international statistics note that Nigeria's highest income earner, the oil sector with 70% contribution to the national revenue, employs only about 5% of the country's work force. Another 5% are employed in industrial activity. Agriculture, contributing about 26% to the country's GDP, employs the greatest percentage of the work force with about 70% employment in the sector. The Services sector employs about 20% of the Nigerian work force largely owed to the telecommunications, banking and IT businesses which have flourished recently in the country, and the small number of local professional firms. In view of this fact, therefore, Nigeria is economically under-productive, relative to its potential for significant development and its capacity to employ its own population seems to diminish progressively, despite the country's quantifiable fiscal ability resulting from the production and disposal of oil. The reasons for this development notwithstanding, the fact remains that for many people, and ultimately for the country itself, there are too many 'dependants' in the population; there are too many who strain the few salaries available in a family.

Therefore, it is common to see young people out on the street either looking for work or loitering about in the neighbourhood. Consequently, unemployment is a major problem in Nigeria that involves the loss of output and income economically, socially and morally. This is because it has resulted in more and more people, who do not have purchasing power. Less consumption has, in turn, led to lower production, and economic growth has been hampered. On the social front, its consequence includes increase in the rate of crime (Echebiri, 2005; Chigunta, 2002). Morally, unemployment is an aberration that emphasizes injustice and the degradation of the unemployed. It highlights the inability and failure of the government to cater for the

welfare of the citizenry. In Nigeria, secondary-school graduates constitute the principal fraction of the unemployed accounting for nearly 35% to 50% rate of unemployment within the age group of 20 to 24 years is 40 % between 15 to 19 years it is 31 % (Economy Watch, 2009: n.p). Hence, the youth, who are supposedly at the height of their potentials, skills and talents largely constitute the unemployed.

However, as Nigeria commits itself to realize the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), it becomes clear that the task of eradicating poverty cannot be realised in a country riddled with mass unemployment and a rising crime wave. For instance, empirical data shows that "the youth constitute the heart of 90-95% of violent conflicts in Nigeria" (Omeje, 2005: 1). In the same vein, the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA) (2008) reveals that the youth, who are able-bodied but unskilled, jobless and alienated are often ready to take up arms in exchange for small amounts of money together with the promise of recognition, loot and "wives". In other words, in this implication, they are more likely to join warring factions or criminal gangs in order to gain some measure of "empowerment". Consequently, mass unemployment leads to frustration, depression, drug abuse, gradual drift into other anti-social and criminal behaviour and/or outright hostility (Adekunle, 1999; Egbuna, 2001).

Therefore, because the socio-economic and political structures have proven unable to adequately cater for the teeming youth population and this has in turn resulted in their alienation from the mainstream of the economy in Nigeria, there is a crisis of youth. This means that the measures taken by government have failed to address the concerns of young people generally and youth unemployment in particular. In fact, where steps have been taken in the past, they have been assessed to be inadequate and ineffective. In this context, the future of young people who constitute the majority of the population in Nigeria is bleak. Hence, the all-hands-on-deck approach has been solicited because the problem begs for immediate and strategic solutions. This is because the alternative is that young people tend to drift into anti-social behaviour patterns and eventually become dysfunctional and criminalized. This invariably undermines the reputation and re-branding campaign of the nation.

Specifically, the thrust of this paper is that the Nigerian church has a role to play in the public space because it is a relevant socio-religious institution. This fact is buttressed with the following points: 1) the Nigerian church was originally designed to be problem-solving which resulted in the establishment of mission primary/post-primary schools and hospitals. This means that the church was as much interested in the spiritual needs

people as it was in their educational, health and economic needs, thereby, giving holistic attention to the needs of the community. 2) Currently, there is hardly any nook or cranny without the presence of at least one church. In other words, in some places, the church is even closer to the people than the government. Hence, with its peculiar perspective and operation it holds a central place in the life and experience of the people in contemporary society.

In the light of the above, this research was undertaken with the aim of finding out if the church is doing enough in the social sphere or if the reality on ground leaves more to be desired. The challenge, therefore, is that the church can expand her theological scope to include social action evangelism, which may entail networking with government and other relevant social institutions in their effort to address the malaise of youth unemployment in Nigeria. This challenge is borne out of the understanding that the church is equally a stakeholder in the society and if nothing is done, the burden of a dysfunctional youth will be borne by all segments of the society.

Definition of Terms

Without losing sight of their universal meanings, terms are given contextual definitions with particular reference to how they are applied in an academic work of this nature. This is primarily done to clarify the key concepts used, thereby keep in step with the accepted practice. The terms that require our attention are: church, unemployment and youth.

Church: the church is a community of believers whose mandate is to be the sign of the reign of God among men. It is a microcosm of the larger community and closely mirrors its composition. The church is called to model the love of God toward society and its needs and problems.

Unemployment: Adebayo (1999) assets the definition of unemployment is problematic. The Encyclopaedia Americana (1995) states that unemployment literally applies to all persons without work and actively looking for work. Englama (2001) points out that the unemployment rate in an economy is the number of people unemployed expressed as a percentage of the total labour force. The total labour force is defined as the number of people employed plus the number of people unemployed within the age bracket of 18-60 years. Unemployment according to Adebayo (1999) exists when members of the labour force wish to work but cannot get jobs. As used in this paper, unemployment, however, refers to the inability of a significant number of the productive labour force who is able and willing to work, to find jobs for a protracted period.

Various forms of unemployment have been identified and elaborated upon in the literature. These include seasonal, frictional, cyclical, structural unemployment (Adebayo, 1999; Damachi, 2001; Hollister, Goldstein, 1994; Robert, 1993; Sills 1995; Todaro, 1992). Other technological, residual and disguised unemployment.

Youth: Echebiri (2005: 5) posits that the continuing debate on who is a youth has not resolved the confusion surrounding the concept. Not surprisingly, therefore, the concept of youth has been understood and used differently by different governments, non-governmental organizations and the public in general (Mkandawire, 1996). For instance, the United Nations uses the age category of 15-24 years to define a youth while the Commonwealth uses the age category of 15-29 years. Most countries have either adopted the United Nations or Commonwealth definition. However, sociologically, youth denotes the interface between childhood and adulthood (Chigunta, 2002). It should be noted, however, that the youth in any society are those who have the potentials to stimulate economic growth, social progress and overall national development. This is largely because they are the young, energetic and adventurous members of the society who are characteristically resourceful, optimistic, fearless and bold. In this study, they are aggregated within the 15-34 years bracket. Young people and youth are used interchangeably.

Causes of Youth Unemployment in Nigeria

There are many causes of youth unemployment and it is vital that we understand them to effectively combat them. This is because of the need to proffer salient solutions to tackle them as against merely treating the symptoms. Four major causes of unemployment identified by scholars are:

Recession: When the economy is not growing and jobs are not being created, unemployment ensues and rises. A recessive economy is caused by corruption and recklessness in public finances. Combating recession is through a prudent fiscal policy that includes incentives to invest and to create jobs, money, including lower taxation and interest rates.

2) Over-Regulation: Over-regulation is another cause of unemployment that results from too much burden on a business' shoulders which hinders the expansion of the business and its ability to create more jobs. Because of this, the unemployed find it almost impossible to get work; it is especially common for young people, and anyone who finds him/herself out of work who is middle aged. Characteristically, there is too much paperwork involved in doing anything and too many regulations that stifle job creation efforts.

leads to a two-tier system, usually, with those who are already employed having a job for life, and those who do not have a job unable to find one and forced to eke out a living any way they can. By implication, there are too few job offers for the demand and the shortage leads to poverty and chronic unemployment.

3) Skills: To be able to handle certain jobs, a person may need to acquire a set of skills. If the person does not have the skills for a job, then he or she either gets training or he or she is unable to get the job. When the types of jobs in a certain area change, then people without the right skills are either forced to move to a different area or they are unable to find work. In the meantime, these new jobs are filled up with new people, who do have the skills these require. A technology shift can lead to this sort of unemployment, which is structural in nature. The wrong approach to this problem would be to keep the old jobs going forever, because it is unsustainable. A lot of money will be spent and the people will keep their jobs, without any possibility to improve their situation. The way to solve this issue is through training.

4) Lack of Information: A source of unemployment that cannot be overlooked is the lack of information about available jobs. If people are not aware that there are jobs, then they will not take them. It is also important that when people become aware of possible employment opportunities for them, they are able to take them. Dissemination of information is fundamental in any market, including the job market. The obvious solution to this problem is to be able to bring information to the people who need it. Job centres do that, and the more efficient they are, the more effective they are.

The other causes of youth unemployment in Nigeria, according to Ekwowusi (2002: n.p), include "mismanagement of the economy, inefficiency of government, monumental corruption, plundering of national treasury, government over spending and over subsidy, executive robbery either by the stroke of the pen or barrel of the gun".

In arguing that the most persistent and intractable unemployment problems are those of young people, Okorie (2000) posited that this is because young people are especially vulnerable: (a) to layoffs because of their lack of seniority in the work place; and (b) because they are relative neophytes to the ways of the labour market. Thus, the lack of experience and exposure are critical factors that deny them the opportunities they seek as honest income earners.

Adebayo (1999) and Echebiri (2005) who looked at it from the demand and supply angle give another slant to the picture. In their view,

youth unemployment generally arises whenever the supply of labour exceeds the demands for it at the prevailing wage rate and this is caused by rural-urban migration, which is explained in terms of push-pull factors. Push factors include: (a) the lack of infrastructural facilities in the rural areas, which makes rural life unattractive to young people; and (b) the dependence on the seasonal cycle of the climate for livelihood. On the other hand, pull factors include: (a) a wide rural-urban income differential in favour of urban dwellers; and (b) a presumed higher probability of securing lucrative jobs in the city. Thus, these scholars believe that rural-urban youth migration is a major causative factor of youth unemployment. This point is appreciated in the light of the data showing that by 2010 over 50 per cent of young people in Africa will be residing in urban areas (Sarr; 2000). This situation is due of the general neglect of rural areas in the allocation of economic amenities and opportunities.

Rapid population growth is another causative factor of unemployment in Nigeria. This tends to swell the labour force beyond the available jobs. Hence, the high and rapid increase in labour force is inversely proportional to the absorptive capacity of the economy. This has pushed a larger percentage of young people into the informal sector where they are more or less under-employed and at risk of being laid off at whim. For instance, Manning and Junankar (1998) argue that the substantial increase in the number of graduates has been accompanied with difficulties in finding suitable employment. Ezekiel (2008: n.p) asserts that currently, "over 60 per cent of graduates from Nigerian universities and various tertiary institutions have difficulty in getting jobs. Seven out of 10 university graduates are unemployed, underemployed or unemployable". In his view, the problem with Nigeria is not scarcity of jobs but the absence of people who have the skills that employers are looking for. The Economic Report for Africa (2007: xiii) further concurs that youth unemployment is one of the greatest challenges to Nigeria. In another vein, Nigeria's school system has been criticized for its neglect of vocational and technical/practical education. Therefore, even where there are jobs, job seekers often do not possess employable skills because the excessive emphasis on paper qualifications does not arm them with the relevant skills that could make them employable by employers of labour. As a result, most graduates do not think in terms of what they can produce but in terms of formal employment which is often not available. In the final analysis, the supply of educated manpower above the equivalent demand contributes to the problem of youth unemployment in Nigeria because it does not have any direct impact on the availability of jobs for young graduates.

Effects of Youth Unemployment in Nigeria

Young people now constitute a depleting agent; a huge economic burden and liability instead of a resource because they are not constructively engaged in productive labour. Consequently, it is rather the norm for political parties and their chieftains to recruit them as thugs to serve as fodder during political campaigns and rallies. The Economic Report on Africa (2007: 3-6) reveals that these youth are paid, armed and even drugged to foment trouble and create a state of anarchy in the polity. In addition, youth unemployment occasions a low rate of trading and industrial activity within the labour force, that is, the country operates at below its capacity. There is also a direct impact on families and livelihoods because young people who can scarcely meet their basic social needs such as food, shelter and clothing tend to become dependants and/or engage in anti-social activities in order to meet their needs.

The large-scale youth unemployment in Nigeria has encouraged the development of street-based youth who, in the absence of any legitimate means of livelihood, grow up in a criminalized culture, especially with the proliferation of youth gangs in the society (Chigunta, 2002; Bennel, 2000). Others survive by engaging in various activities such as petty trading/hawking, casual work, stealing, pick-pocketing, prostitution, touting and other illegal activities. Some have become addicted to alcohol and/or drugs such as marijuana. It, therefore, accounts for the many vagrants in the society, after all, what else do people do with time on their hands and nothing on their minds but wreak havoc on the society?

The Trend of Youth Unemployment

According to Echebiri (2005: 9) unemployment in Nigeria could be broadly divided into two main headings (sic). 1) Open unemployment and 2) underemployment or disguised unemployment. Lambo (1987), defines open unemployment as that which is mainly associated with the urban areas of the country. Todaro further (1992) states that it involves people who are able and eager to work but for whom no suitable jobs are available. On the other hand, disguised unemployment or underemployment applies to the situation that prevails in the rural areas which are often underdeveloped and overpopulated. This is because there are usually more self-employed workers whether in family farms or non-agricultural enterprises. Typically, it refers to people who are working full time but whose productivity is so low that a reduction in hours would have a negligible impact on total output. For example, if four persons are cultivating a piece of land that could as well be cultivated by three people, then only three of them are really well employed,

the fourth person represents disguised unemployment. Consequently people are perceived as employed but actually they are unemployed. The reason being that general production would not suffer any reduction if a certain number of them are actually withdrawn. This could explain the contention that there is a higher level of unemployment in the urban areas because unemployment in rural areas is generally under-reported. Disguised unemployment also occurs when the growth of the labour force exceeds the amount of investment made.

Methodology

Study Area

The study was conducted in Aba. Aba city lies along the west bank of the River in Abia state which is located in the south-eastern region of Nigeria. It is low-lying with a heavy rainfall of about 2400 mm/year and especially intense between the months of April through October. Aba is a residential area and host to a number of banks, industries and business enterprises which accounts for a large presence of young people. The population estimate for the city is 931,900 but the current population estimate according to Wikipedia (2009: n.p) is one and a half million. It consists of civil servants, traders, artisans, people engaged in various services, workers in the organized sector and vagrant street vendors. Wikipedia (2009) also reports that "unemployment in the city is at its highest level, with dilapidated hospitals and schools, crime, school drop-outs and general discontent at its highest since the colonial era". Yet, there is a constant influx of school leavers and migrants from adjoining and distant communities in search of job opportunities.

Aba is a commercial city of international repute featuring a concentration of small scale industries and a number of sizable markets including the famous Ariaria international market. It is very densely populated and has a high ratio of artisans in its population. Administratively, the city falls into two local government areas namely: Aba North and Aba South. Aba North has its headquarters at Eziukwu-Aba, while Aba South has its headquarters at Aba Town Hall. The city has played a lasting role in the Christian evangelism of the Southeast of Nigeria since the British brought the Church Missionary Society (CMS), an evangelism vehicle of the Church of England used to plant what today has become the Anglican Church in Nigeria. The CMS and the Catholic Church founded most of the Primary and Secondary Schools in the city. With the arrival of the Pentecostal brand of Christianity (the evangelicals) in Nigeria, the city got an enormous

share for itself. The Assemblies of God Church, being among the earliest and the Deeper Christian Life Ministry, etc, had massive following in the early 1980s.

The study was carried out in Aba cosmopolitan area to purposefully include a cross-section of all perceivable social and economic segments of the city's population. Its advantage includes the fact that it combines high residential density with urban characteristics and a high population of young people in addition to a number of business interests.

Sample Size

The sample was made up of 250 (two hundred and fifty) respondents. This cuts across students, clergy and lay workers, business men/women and traders, civil servants, self-employed and the unemployed. It however excluded anyone who was not resident in the town. The youth were generally met either at home or in their respective places of work, others were met at the park and an Anglican, a Roman Catholic and a Pentecostal church [Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG)] was sampled respectively. In all, two hundred and twenty (220) youth were randomly sampled. Ten (10) leaders (clergy and lay workers) of the Roman Catholic, Protestant and Pentecostal Churches were sampled respectively bringing the number to 30 (thirty) leaders of the church sampled in the town. Altogether, 250 (two hundred and fifty) questionnaires were distributed.

Sampling Technique

A multi-phase sampling technique was used for the data collection procedure. This procedure included the distribution of questionnaire, extensive library research and personal observation. By implication, both primary and secondary sources were consulted in the course of the study.

Data were analyzed using percentages and the analytical interpretative model was systematically used to explain the findings.

Instrument for the Study, Method of Data Collection and Analysis

The instrument consists of four clusters: A) general information which includes relevant socio-economic characteristics of respondents: urban residency status, unemployment/employment status, as well as job perceptions and preferences. B) Scale of incidence of youth unemployment. C) The link between youth unemployment and dysfunction. D) Impact of government policies and projects on youth empowerment; and E) perception of the effort of the church. The questionnaire was face validated by a clergy and three scholars in the fields of religion, economics and

sociology/anthropology. The instrument was also pre-tested in Nsulu to certify the relevance of the items before they were taken to the field.

Secondary data were collected from research reports and published materials.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Two hundred and fifty (250) questionnaires were administered in but only two hundred and forty-five (245) were validly filled returned. The response rate is shown in table I below:

Table I: Returned Rate of Questionnaire

Questionnaire	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Returned	245	98
Not Returned	5	2
Total (Distributed)	250	100

Source: Survey data, 2009

In table I above, we see that 245 (98%) of the respondents distributed and returned their questionnaires, while 5 (2%) were unable to return. This high rate of returned questionnaire could be attributed to the intensive follow-up measures undertaken by the researcher. Consequently, the findings will be based on the two hundred and forty-five validly completed questionnaires.

Background Variables

The socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents will be presented and they include: age, gender, occupation and highest academic qualification.

Age of Respondents

The age of the respondents ranged from 18 to 58 and above years were arranged into an interval of 10 years each. The details are given in Table II below:

Table II: Percentage Distribution of Respondents by Age

Age Range	Frequency		Percentage		Frequency	Percentage
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Total	Total
18 – 27	36	41	25.35	39.81	77	31.43
28 – 37	53	38	37.32	36.89	91	37.14
38 – 47	26	23	18.31	22.33	49	20
48 – 57	24	1	16.90	0.97	25	10.20
58 – above	3		2.11		3	1.22
Total	142	103	99.99	100	245	99.99

Source: survey data, 2009

We gather from table II that out of the 245 respondents, the highest proportion of 91 (37.14%) fall within ages 28–37 years, closely followed by the 18–27 years range that has 77 (31.43%). Next is the 38–47 years group with 49 (20%), the 47–58 years range come after them with 25 (10.20%) and the least is the 58 and above group with 3 (1.22%).

It, therefore, means that most of the respondents 217 (88.57%) are people within the age range of 18–47 years. It should, therefore, be noted that the larger number of respondents are within the youth stage which is very relevant to this study.

Distribution by Gender

Questionnaires were distributed to both male and female respondents in the study area. Table III below illustrates this.

Table III: Percentage Distribution of Respondents by Sex

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	142	57.96
Female	103	42.04
Total	245	100

Source: survey data, 2009

This table (III) shows that males constituted 142 (57.96%) of the total respondents while females constituted 103 (42.04%). This implies that more males than females were available and participated at the time when the

questionnaires were distributed.

Distribution by Educational Qualification

In this section, we were interested in finding out the highest educational qualification of the respondents.

Table IV: Percentage Distribution of Respondents by Educational Qualification

Qualification	Frequency	Percentage
None		
FSLC	21	8.57
WASC/GCE	76	31.02
Diploma	72	29.39
1st Degree	73	29.80
2nd Degree & Above	3	1.22
Total	245	100

Source: survey data, 2009

Table IV above indicates that the category with the highest frequency (31.02%) have obtained the WASC/GCE. This group is followed by with a first degree 73 (29.80%) and diploma 72 (29.39%) respectively. Others include FSLC 21 (8.57%) and second degree 3 (1.22%).

Imperatively, all of the respondents 245 (100%) have obtained level of formal education and we did not encounter anyone who did not even the most basic education. By implication, it can be taken at face that all the respondents understood the issue at stake to some degree.

Distribution by Occupation

This target here was to find out the occupational status of the respondents. Table V gives us a picture of this.

Table V: Percentage Distribution of Respondents by Occupation

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Student	79	32.24
Clergy	23	9.39
Business/Trade	32	13.06
Civil Servant	50	20.41
Unemployed	33	13.47
Self-employed	28	11.43
Total	245	100

Source: survey data, 2009

This table shows that 79 (32.24%) of the respondents were students at various levels of study. Civil servants constituted 50 (20.41%) and unemployed persons were 33 (13.47%). They are followed by people in different businesses and trade 32 (13.06%), the self-employed 28 (11.43%) and the clergy 23 (9.39%).

The fact that civil servants appear to be more than those in business and trade in a commercial city like Aba may not be unconnected with the fact that some business men/women and traders may have indicated that they are self-employed.

Substantive Issues of the Research

Consequent upon the restiveness and general dysfunction associated with the youth in recent times, youth unemployment has generated heated debate across board in the society. The issues raised revolve around the causative factors, consequences and likely solutions to the problem. The bottom-line, however, remains that the youth are excluded from the machineries of social integration and development in Nigeria.

Based on the above premise, we will present and analyse data on the issue of youth unemployment and the role of the church based on the views of respondents on the scale of incidence of youth unemployment, the link between unemployment and dysfunction, impact of government policies and the perception of the effort of the church. With these research objectives as a guide, the respondents' reactions to the questions asked were analyzed using percentages and graphical illustrations.

Table VI: Percentage Distribution of Respondents in Abia State

Rating	Frequency				Percentage			
	SD	D	A	SA	SD	D	A	SA
Scale of Incidence of Youth Unemployment	443	688	349	235	25.8	40.1	20.3	13.7
Link Between Unemployment and Dysfunction	375	422	381	292	25.5	28.7	25.9	19.9
Impact of Government Policies on Youth Unemployment	373	395	365	92	30.4	32.2	29.8	7.5
Perception of the Effort of the Church	282	541	574	318	16.4	31.5	33.5	18.5

The graphic presentation below vividly illustrates the findings

Source: survey data, 2009

The Scale of Incidence of Youth Unemployment

Table VI indicates that 688 (40.1%) of the respondents disagreed that unemployment was a social problem that deserved attention and 443 (25.8%) strongly disagreed. However, 349 (20.3%) agreed that something needed to be done and 235 (13.7%) strongly felt that it was a crucial socio-economic problem.

The graphic presentation below vividly illustrates the findings.

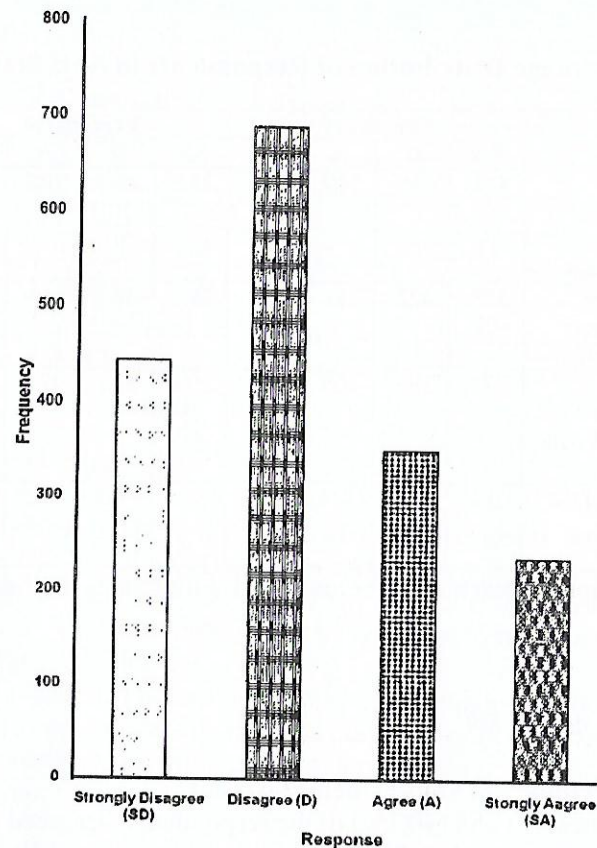


Fig. 2: scale of incidence of youth unemployment

By implication, the larger proportion of the respondents was of the view that youth unemployment is not a very serious socio-economic problem in Aba. This does not, however, agree with extant literature on the issue (Echebiri, 2005, Wikipedia, 2009). Therefore, it could mean that the high number of students and civil servants 129 (52.65%) who participated in the survey may be responsible for this divergence of views. Furthermore, there is another explanation in the extended family system/communal lifestyle of the people which enables even adult dependants to be absorbed and supported by parents, siblings and other extended relatives. This system tends to act as an insulator that shields people from stark realities so that an unemployed person may be well off on the patronage of other people. As such, he/she may not find anything wrong with not having a job when almost all his/her needs

are met by other people. Another factor that could be responsible for development is complacency among many young people to look for work after having faced repeated disappointment in the labour market. This could explain the high and increasing levels of kidnapping for ransom and the large number of criminalized and/or street youth in the city.

Link between Unemployment and Dysfunction

From table VI it is also clear that 422 (28.7%) of the respondents disagreed that the level of youth unemployment in the city was directly proportional to the rate of youth dysfunction. However, 381 (25.9%) are of the opinion that the reverse is the case. This is again strongly contested by 375 (25.5%) respondents, while being strongly supported by 292 (19.9%).

By way of a pie chart, this is graphically presented better.

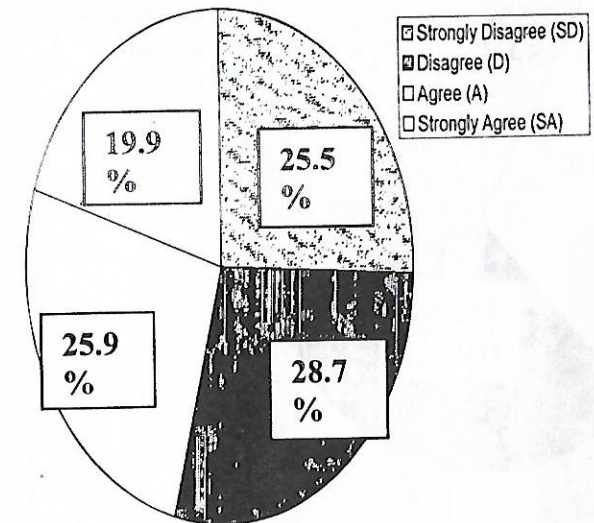


Fig. 2: percentage distribution of respondents on link between unemployment and youth dysfunction.

Again, we observe that the largest proportion of the respondents 422 (28.7%) was of the view that there is no link between youth unemployment and youth dysfunction in the city. This does not also agree with relevant literature data available (Olawale, 2004: 13; Omeje, 2005: 1; Wikipedia, 2009). 797 (54.2%) were in disagreement while 673 (45.8%) agreed that the link existed. It is important, therefore, to note that the difference between the opinions of respondents on the matter is not very wide. Again, could it be the commercial nature of the city (i.e. almost everyone is ostensibly in

in something), gives the impression that the crime rate is unrelated to the unemployment level since everyone appears to be doing something to earn a living yet there is a recorded high and increasing rate of crime?

Impact of Government Policies on Youth Unemployment:

Table VI above portrays that 395(32.2%) of the respondents disagreed that there was any impact of government policy on youth unemployment. They are closely followed by the group that strongly disagrees 373 (30.4%). However, 365 (29.8%) believe that they see the impact of government policies, while 92 (7.5%) strongly attest to the fact.

This is also presented in a pie chart.

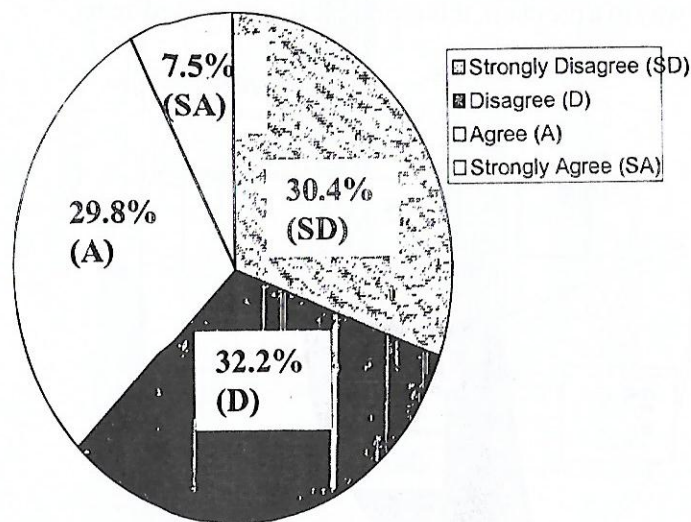


Fig. 3: percentage distribution of respondents on impact of government policies on youth empowerment.

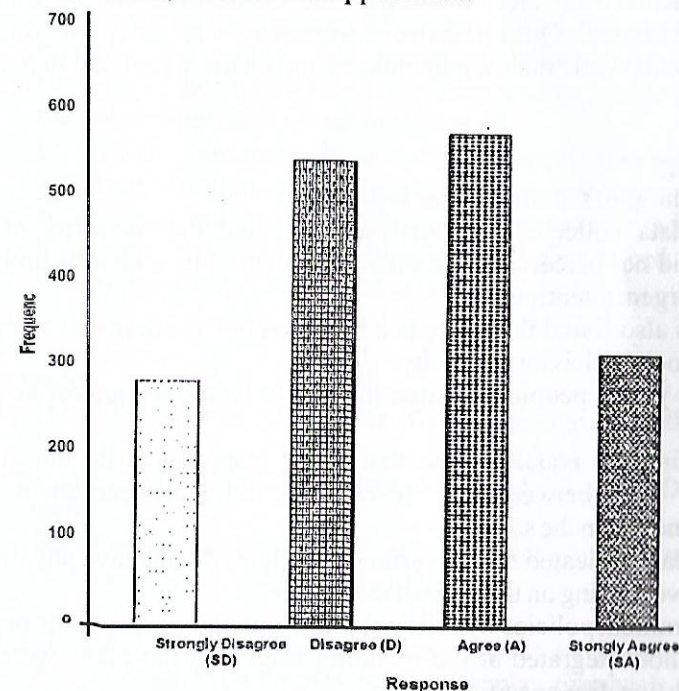
In this case, there is a resounding consonance with the views expressed by Achebe (1983), Chigunta (2002) and ILO (2004). In concurrence too is the view of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), (2004) that "the lack of detailed and empirical analyses on employment in national development policies may be attributed to the assumption that growth would automatically translate into more jobs, and to the lack of understanding of how the labour market works". The import of this observation is that there is a lacuna between government policies on

paper and implementation. By extension, it stands to reason that many people in the society feel that the government is merely scratching the surface of the problem.

Respondents' Perception of the Effort of the Church

Table VI also portrays that 574 (33.5%) of the respondents agreed the church was making some kind of effort in the social arena. This is followed by 541 (31.5%) who say that the impact of the church's effort in social evangelism is yet to be felt. Then 318 (18.5%) strongly agree with the effort of the church, while 282 (16.4%) strongly disagree.

In pictorial format, this data will appear thus.



As is clear here, a larger number of people believe that the church is doing something to step into the public space as against only being concerned with spiritual affairs. This category affirms that the church is not neglecting the socio-economic welfare of their members and the society. However, it is also clear that those who disagree with this position are equally significant. Is it possible that they represent those who do not attend

and/or have any direct contact with the church? Whichever way one chooses to look at it, it is apparent that more needs to be done in this direction.

Summary

The purpose of the study was to look into the problem of youth unemployment in Nigeria, with particular focus on Aba city in Abia state. Our specific concern in this regard was to determine the place of social service delivery in the evangelization effort of the church. This study therefore, was intended to appraise the role of the church in the Nigerian public space.

The target population comprised community residents in the city between ages eighteen and above. A sample size of two hundred and fifty (250) respondents was selected through the cluster and simple random sampling techniques. Questionnaire instrument was adopted for the generation of data while tables, percentages and charts were used to present the data.

Major Findings

The major findings of the study are as follows:

- a. The data collected and analysed revealed that majority of the respondents did not perceive youth unemployment to be a serious problem that required urgent attention.
- b. It was also found that there is a high level of youth involvement in anti-social behavior in the city.
- c. Many young people indicated interest to be trained and/or acquire skills.
- d. Our findings equally show that many respondents do not attach much link between the level of youth unemployment and dysfunction in the society.
- e. The data indicated that government policies do not have any direct, positive bearing on the lives of the people.
- f. Government policies were found wanting mainly because the people were not integrated at the planning stage and the plans were not usually locality-specific.
- g. We also found that a good number of the respondents believe that government is failing in its responsibility to provide social amenities and infrastructure for the people.
- h. It does appear that the church is socially involved in the public space.
- i. Our data also affirmed that some of the respondents were directly employed as teachers and health workers by the church.

- j. Many of the respondents disagreed that the church should not have any direct contact with the government in any way. A good number believe that politicians will corrupt the church leadership.
- k. Almost all the respondents agreed that getting involved in social action evangelism will not derail the church from its spiritual goals, rather it will boost its activities.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

- a. Government should integrate the people through the church in the planning and execution of projects that are locality-specific and relevant. This appeared to be a major reason why government's impact was said to be inadequate.
- b. The church should serve as a data resource base for the government and other non-governmental organizations that are interested in reaching the people. This recommendation is submitted on the basis of the strength of the fact that the church has a more visible presence at the government at the grass root level.
- c. Finally, the church should set up skill(s) acquisition centres using members in various professional fields as resource persons. This is to serve to: a) engage the youth productively and creatively; b) provide them an honest means of livelihood; and c) afford the church a unique opportunity to witness to them.

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