



## **Youth Unemployment and its Impact on National Development in Nigeria: A Study of Konshisha Local Government Area of Benue State**

**Yandela T. Emmanuel<sup>1</sup>, Kingsley U. Ayangealu<sup>2</sup> & Apav. T. Joseph<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>1, 2 & 3</sup>Department of Public Administration, Benue State University, Makurdi

*Corresponding Author's Email:* yandelaemmanuel@gmail.com

### **Abstract**

The paper examines youth unemployment and its effects on national development, focusing on the Konshisha Local Government Area of Benue State. A descriptive survey design was used, gathering data from both primary and secondary sources. A sample of 386 respondents was selected for the study, the paper is grounded in the Human Security theory. The findings indicate that key factors contributing to persistent youth unemployment in Konshisha Local Government Area include a lack of skills, educational mismatches, corruption, and limited access to startup capital for businesses. Additionally, the study found that ongoing social and civil unrest is a significant consequence of youth unemployment in the area. The study recommends revising the national education system to prioritize entrepreneurship and skill acquisition from primary through tertiary levels, reforming of government policies to support businesses, encourage startups, and promote mechanized agriculture to help employ youth effectively.

**Keywords:** Konshisha LGA, Youth, Unemployment, National Security, Crime

**Citation of article:** Yandela T. E; Ayangealu K. U. & Apav. T. J. (2024). Youth Unemployment and its Impact on National Development in Nigeria: A Study of Konshisha Local Government Area of Benue State, *African Journal of Politics and Administrative Studies, AJPAS*, 17(2):771-786

**Date submitted:** 10/09/2024 **Date Accepted:** 31/10/2024 **Date Published:** December, 2024

### **Introduction**

Nigeria is rich in both human and natural resources. However, it faces numerous political, social, and economic challenges that have significantly affected the quality of life for its citizens. One major issue is youth unemployment, a global problem that is particularly severe in developing countries like Nigeria. Unemployment is both an economic and social issue that impacts nearly every country and its people, leading to social anxiety and contributing to crime, youth unrest, and unstable socio-economic conditions. Developing nations, including Nigeria, are currently grappling with severe job shortages and a lack of decent work opportunities.

Recognizing the crucial role that youth play in the socio-economic development and security of the continent, African nations have increasingly acknowledged both the significant challenges



and substantial opportunities that young people represent. The African Union (AU) Assembly of Heads of State and Government designated 2009 to 2018 as the "Decade on Youth Development in Africa" during their Executive Council meeting in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in January 2009 (Reichi, 2019). This initiative led to the development of a Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment and Development in Africa, which was approved by the Conference of Ministers in charge of Youth (COMY III) in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe. This plan outlines a strategy for implementing the African Youth Charter (Griffiths, 2012). Despite these efforts, youth unemployment continues to be a widespread global issue.

Unemployment presents a challenge for global economic growth and individual countries' advancement. The lack of jobs for the youth has been cited as one of the causes of radicalization, with idle youths turning to terrorism for a sense of identity and financial security (Njari, 2015). The issue of rising youth unemployment has occupied the agenda of successive governments in post-colonial Nigeria. Some policies, programs, and initiatives have been crafted to try and address youth unemployment. Some of the youth employment programs and policies that stand out include the N-power, SURE-P, and NDE among others (Nichols, Mitchell & Lindner, 2013).

Youth unemployment and its impact on national security and development in Nigeria have been significant concerns for both past and present governments. Unemployment often leads to a range of social and political problems, reflecting potential issues with public policy, societal structure, and economic systems (Okafor, 2011). In Nigeria and many parts of Africa, high rates of youth unemployment are linked to elevated criminal activity and increased risks to national security (Kayode, Arome & Anyio, 2014). Nigerian youths and the general population face major difficulties, including high unemployment, underemployment, and few investment opportunities. In 2023, Nigeria's overall unemployment rate climbed to around 41%, up from 40.6% in 2022. However, by 2024, it slightly decreased from 5.2% to 5.0% (NBS, 2023 & 2024). Despite these variations, both youths and the wider population have faced significant hardships during these years. These issues have prevented many unemployed youths and other individuals from making substantial contributions to society, leading to increased anti-social behaviors such as drug abuse, crime, school dropouts, and gambling, which have posed growing threats to national security. Therefore, it is against this background that, the paper examines



Youth unemployment and its impact on national security and development in Nigeria; a study of Konshisha Local Government Area of Benue State.

## **Conceptual Elucidation**

### **Youth**

The concept of "youth" varies significantly across different countries and cultures. The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) initially defined youth as individuals aged 15 to 24 during the International Youth Year in 1985 (UNIDESIA, 2004). This definition was reaffirmed in 1995 with the adoption of a world programme of action for youth extending to the year 2000 and beyond. However, the UNGA acknowledged that the age range for youth can differ among countries and societies (Kura, 2008). In practice, the definition of youth is contested and heavily influenced by cultural, social, institutional, legal, and political factors (O'Higgins, 2001). In developing countries where there is no established minimum school-leaving age, the definition often depends on local cultural and institutional frameworks (O'Higgins, 2017).

According to Kura (2008), how a nation defines youth is closely related to its specific socio-economic, political, and historical contexts. Many national youth policies consider youth to be individuals who are of voting age, typically eighteen years old. In Nigeria and other countries, this legal recognition marks the end of the youth period. The African Union (AU) defines youth as individuals aged 15 to 35. This definition accounts for the transitional nature of youth, which is shaped by various social, economic, political, and cultural factors. It also acknowledges that individuals outside this age range may still experience aspects of this transitional phase (Bruhns, 2016).

### **Unemployment**

The concept of unemployment is longstanding and closely tied to industrial-era economies, and it remains a complex issue. Chukwuma (2013) notes that unemployment is often defined in relation to employment, with the latter serving as the baseline for understanding the former. He also highlights that defining unemployment becomes more challenging when considering its various forms, such as underemployment, low-wage work, and informal employment. In its simplest form, unemployment refers to a situation where an eligible and capable individual lacks a job or



work for which they receive compensation. According to Chukwuma, unemployment is inherently problematic and its definition is complicated by its different manifestations.

### **Youth Unemployment**

Salihu, Muhammed, and Bayero (2016) view youth unemployment as a global issue where the eligible young workforce is unable to contribute to their countries' development. The primary difference among countries is the scale and distribution of unemployment rates, which vary significantly. This problem is not only a critical economic concern but also has widespread implications that impact nearly every country, including Nigeria, and affects individuals both directly and indirectly. Unemployment, particularly among graduates, leads to social unrest, increased crime rates, ongoing youth discontent, and an unstable socio-economic environment.

Ajufo (2013) argues that youth unemployment has significant national and global repercussions, including increased violence, crime, drug abuse, and political instability. Additionally, there is a rise in systematic crimes facilitated by Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Many individuals involved in these sophisticated crimes have formal education and training. When the government fails to effectively utilize their skills, these individuals often turn to illegal activities to employ their talents.

Aardt (2012) explains that the psychological and social costs of prolonged unemployment during one's productive years severely affect the quality of life for both individuals and their families. This prolonged unemployment can lead to low self-esteem and a loss of self-identity, impacting both physical and mental health. It can also result in broader issues such as social isolation and the erosion of social networks and support systems. Overall, unemployment diminishes people's sense of belonging and contribution to society (Aardt, 2012). Thus, youth unemployment has repercussions not only for the individual but also for families and society at large.

Nichols, Mitchell, and Lindner (2013) argue that long-term unemployment can have significant direct effects on individuals, families, and communities. As time goes on, the erosion of human capital increases, and the chances of securing new employment decline. Furthermore, the stress of prolonged unemployment can impact an individual's physical and mental health, affect family relationships, and harm the well-being of their children. Over time, this stress can also contribute



to societal issues such as rising crime rates and other serious problems (Nichols, Mitchell, & Lindner, 2013).

O'Higgins (2017) notes that increasing youth unemployment can lead to a "lost generation" issue for many economies. He elaborates that when young people remain outside the labor market, it has repercussions not just in the present but also in the future. The initial experiences of young people in the workforce are crucial for both their own futures and the future of their countries, as today's youth will eventually become tomorrow's leaders.

Ayhan (2016) in his working paper on youth unemployment also reinforced the perception that the unemployed youth feel desperate, idle, excluded, discouraged, scarred and thus they have to accept worse working conditions, part-time and temporary jobs and lower income jobs. The ILO (2006) report further stressed that, if the youth do not find regular jobs, these negative feelings and costs can impact their whole lives. What's more, being unemployed at the beginning of working life causes different mental disorders such as depression, suicide attempts and desperation. These effects are long term effects because; the longer the unemployment period, the more the youth skills and motivation becomes obsolete (Ayhan, 2016).

### **National Security**

National insecurity is caused by the failure of national government to address the special needs of its people. Such needs include hunger, poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, inequality, injustice among others. However, the issues of poverty, hunger, illiteracy, unemployment are interwoven because one aspect may be responsible for the manifestation of another. National security is the requirement to maintain the survival of the state through the use of economy, diplomacy, power projection, and political power. Security threats can come in any form. The present security threat in Nigeria is that of Boko-Haram terrorist and armed bandits' attacks on the government and the country at large. While the upcoming threat to its Nigeria's security is the issue of youth unemployment which demands attention from the government.

Giroux (2015) conceives national security as encompassing the collective security interests of individuals, communities, ethnic groups, and the entire political entity. It involves maintaining the state's survival through economic power, diplomacy, power projection, and political



influence. While initially focused on military strength, national security now covers a wide range of aspects, including economic and non-military dimensions, as well as the core values of the national society. Security threats now include not only traditional state adversaries but also violent non-state actors, drug cartels, multinational corporations, and non-governmental organizations. Some experts also consider severe environmental damage caused by natural disasters as part of the security threat landscape (Giroux, 2015).

### **Youth Unemployment and Crime in Konshisha Local Government and Benue State**

Crime has been a persistent challenge throughout the history of civilization, and its prevalence has grown over time. In the realm of politics, public policy addressing crime prevention has been a subject of prolonged and heated debate. Despite considerable efforts aimed at eradicating crime, the crime industry has seen little transformation in contemporary history. Economists typically gauge the availability of employment opportunities through the employment rate. Hence, a high unemployment rate implies a scarcity of job opportunities, lowering the opportunity cost associated with choosing crime over legitimate work (Becker, 1968).

Benue State and Konshisha LGA in particular is grappling with an alarming rise in crime rates. Given the escalating crime situation and the perceived inefficiency of crime control mechanisms, Konshisha LGA is confronted with a notable crime problem. Unfortunately, reports indicate that crimes, often perpetrated by young individuals, are occurring frequently throughout the local government as a result of non-available and viable employment source in the local government. Criminal activities have become an integral and concerning aspect of daily life in the inhabitants of the local government.

The frustration and desperation that daily torments the unemployed youths in Konshisha Local Government creates fertile ground for crime to thrive in the local government and the state in general. In recent times, there have been notable adverse social, economic and political developments in Konshisha Local Government Area, a consequence of youth unemployment and underemployment, particularly exemplified by increased militancy groups, violent crimes, restiveness and political instability (Ajufo, 2013). The scariest undertone of the state's socio-economic underachievement, by far, is the steady rise in youth crime, nurtured in the climate of



increasing national income and the simultaneous failure of employment-generation and poverty alleviation programmes.

Unemployment serves as a major catalyst for social vices such as armed robbery, destitution, prostitution, political thuggery, and kidnapping (Awogbenle and Iwuamde, 2010). This assertion holds true not only for Konshisha LGA, Benue State but also for many other states with similar human development indicators. In such contexts, engaging in criminal activities is viewed as a survival strategy. Consequently, youth unemployment emerges as a significant threat to the nation's stability and development. If left unaddressed, it has the potential to result in disastrous consequences for the nation.

### **Youth Unemployment and National Security**

There is a widely presumed fundamental link between youth unemployment and its implications for national security. However, hard substantiation to demonstrate this is lacking. Mude (2014) emphasized that a key factor in this assertion is the deficiency of data on youth in developing countries such as Nigeria.

According to Lamido (2013), unemployment is generally caused by improper orientation of the youths, absence of policy on social welfare, societal attitude towards vocational and technical education, and inadequate teaching facilities. These have manifested in the alarming rate of armed robberies in the south-west region; militancy and arson in the south-south region; terrorism in the north-west, north-central and northeast regions; and kidnapping in the south-east region. All these have impacts on the security situation in the country, and on business and investments; socio-political processes and governance. The unemployed must find a means of livelihood and this they do by engaging in crimes and making themselves available to the political class as thugs and assassins. Political violence, ethno-religious conflicts and terrorism rife in Nigeria today are no doubt consequences of unemployment and poverty.

Youth unemployment as it concerns national security has been garnering a significant body of literature. Adebayo (2013) and Kanaparo, Rayel, Imbun, & Jacka, (2012) posited that the unemployed undergo relative deprivation and lack of freedom from want. As a result, the social environment of the poor and jobless in any given country often leads them to crime and other





social vices. Adebayo (2013) further postulated that the unemployed experience low self-esteem, deprivation, frustration and acute want. This condition may lead the unemployed youths to deviant behaviours like crime in society.

In Nigeria today and Benue State to be precise, youth unemployment has prompted the resurgence of urchins in form cult groups, kidnappers among other serious sets. These sets are a threat to security and development of the state. Additionally, there has been an increase in the involvement of youths in various anti-social activities and offences as a direct result of unemployment. Such offences include: arson, assault, murder, abduction, terrorism, theft, armed robbery, rape and unlawful possession of arms. In light of the above, unemployment is seen as a major hindrance to youth development and progress and has an adverse effect on the society (Ebobo, 2016).

### **Theoretical Framework**

The paper adopted Human Security theory propounded by Mary Kaldor, Kofi Anan, Thomas and Roberts. The theory came to lime light after the Cold War and was first propounded by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 2010. While the traditional goal of national security emphasized the defense of the state from external aggression, the major argument of human security theory is that since insecurity emanates from individuals, that security should therefore focus on individuals since it is the collective view of people that are required for national, regional and global stability. This is based on the fact that threats to human life emanate not only from situation of violent conflicts but other non-conflict sources of threat such as poverty (unemployment) occasioned by lack of access to means of livelihood (Aminu, et al 2015). Human security is concerned with the protection of individuals from critical and life-threatening dangers such as unemployment. This prompted Beland (2005) to view human security as a condition of existence which entails basic material needs. When individuals at their productive age stay without jobs and means of livelihood, there is every tendency that they resort to available means including violent means to make the two ends meet.





This theory is most appropriate for this paper since most of the insecurity beseeching the country and Konshisha Local Government Area Council, in particular, today are perpetrated by the youth who are jobless and unskilled, and it becomes imperative that security should be tackled by providing protection for individuals in the areas of employment and skill acquisition which is the trajectory of this paper.

## Methodology

The study employed a descriptive survey research design, collecting data primarily through questionnaires. Secondary sources included journals, textbooks, government official gazettes, and online resources to meet the paper's objectives. A total of 386 respondents were purposefully chosen from the eleven (11) council wards of Konshisha Local Government Area in Benue State. The data gathered from the questionnaires were analyzed quantitatively using tables and percentages.

The study area Konshisha local government was established by the Ibrahim Babangida Administration on 4<sup>th</sup> February 1989 with its headquarters at Tse-Agberagba. The local government is housed to about three hundred and twenty-seven thousand (327,000) people (City population Web, 2023). Geographically, the Konshisha Local Government Area is situated in the north-east of Benue State on a leveled piece of land. Its borders are shared by three (3) local governments and a state, notably Gboko Local Government in the north, Gwer in the west, Ushongo and Vandeikya in the east, and Cross River in the south. According to Lyam (2006), the Konshisha Local Government Area is located between latitude 60 55' and 7023' North and longitude 80 40' East. It is located in Nigeria's central region.

The people of Konshisha local government are predominantly farmers who grow a variety of products including yams, cassava, rice, soya beans, guinea corn, groundnuts, and oranges among others. The populace also raises livestock like Goats, pigs, birds, Fulani cattle, and a variety of other domestic animals are some of the livestock raised in the area. Konshisha Local Government Council has enormous tourism potential, but sadly, many of those opportunities haven't been fully realized. The Selagi Mountains, one of Konshisha's stunning tourist



destinations with intriguing features, are among the popular tourist destinations. Additionally, the mountain "U Wo-Selagi" has water accumulated around it, serving as the primary supply of drinking water for the population in the "Selagi Area".

## Results and Discussion of Findings

### *Factors responsible for youth unemployment in Konshisha Local Government Area Benue State*

So many factors have been pointed out as responsible for youth unemployment in Konshisha local government and Benue state in general. Table 2 below shows some of the factors:

**Table 1 Predisposing Factors of Youth Unemployment in Konshisha Local Government Area Benue State**

S/N	Predisposing Factors Responsible for Youth Unemployment in Konshisha LGA	Yes (%)	Undecide (%)	No (%)
1	Educational and skill mismatch has made youths within Konshisha Local Government and Benue State unemployed	289(74.8)	18(4.6)	79(20.0)
2	Corruption and government policies as a fuel for unemployment in Konshisha LGA	367(95.0)	-	19(4.9)
3	Limited access to start-up capital for new businesses is the cause of youth unemployment in Konshisha LGA and Benue State	321(83.1)	37(9.5)	28(7.2)
	Total	368(100)	368(100)	368(100)

**Source: Field Survey, 2024**

In Table 2 289(74.8%) affirmed that education mismatch is a cause of youth unemployment in Nigeria, Benue State, and Konshisha LGA. which has birthed youth unemployment within the local government, 18(4.5%) of the respondents were undecided while 79(20%) of the respondents said no. The result also showed that knowledge acquired or courses studied by youths in school is not in tandem with the required skills for the available jobs in the local government, which has made them unemployable.

Table 2 also revealed the reason for the continuous youth unemployment in Konshisha LGA. as corruption and mismanagement of the nation's scarce resources, inflation, and unfavourable government policies, 367(95%) of the respondents affirmed yes, while 19(4.9%) of the



respondents disagreed. From the foregoing result, it is clearly shown that, corruption, mismanagement of government scarce resources, inflation, and inconsistent government policies that are not in line with the nation's reality precipitate youth unemployment and unending insecurity in Nigeria, Benue State and Konshisha local government area in particular.

Table 2 revealed also that, limited access to startup capital for establishing new businesses is among the factors prompting the prolonged youth unemployment in Konshisha local government area with a consequence on the security of the local government, state and the nation at large as 321(83.1%) agreed, 28(7.2%) of the respondents disagreed while 37(9.5%) of the respondents were undecided.

### **Consequences of Youth Unemployment on Nigeria's National Security and Konshisha local government in particular**

The consequences of youth unemployment in Konshisha local government area and Nigeria in general, are multifaceted and have had a damming negative consequence on the security and economic life of the country.

**Table 2: Consequences of Youth Unemployment on Nigeria's Security Konshisha LGA.**

S/N	Predisposing Consequences of Youth Unemployment in Konshisha LGA	Yes (%)	Undecide (%)	No (%)
1	Social Unrest and Civil Unrest (e.g protests, cult crashes, communal conflicts, arm robbery, rape among others) are among the consequence of youth unemployment on Nigeria's national security	312(80.8)	17(4.4)	57(14.7)
2	Increased vulnerability to radicalization in Konshisha LGA is a consequence of youth unemployment on Nigeria's National security	248(64.2)	64(16.5)	74(19.1)
3	The strain on Law Enforcement Agencies in Konshisha LGA and Benue State at large is a consequence of youth unemployment	322(83.4)	16(4.1)	48(12.4)
4	Diminished trust in traditional authorities that ensure communal peace and harmonious co-existence within Konshisha LGA and Benue State is a consequence of youth unemployment	179(46.3)	87(22.5)	120(31.0)
	Total	368(100)	368(100)	368(100)

**Source: Field Survey, 2023**



Table 3 shows the consequence of youth unemployment on Nigeria's National security as it brings about social and civil unrest in the country, 312(80.8%) of the respondents agreed that the several issues of unrest in the country, Benue and Konshisha LGA in particular, 57(14.7%) of the respondents disagreed while 17(4.4%) of the respondents were undecided. The implication of the result herein means that, the plethora of social and civil unrest in Konshisha Local government Area and Benue State are consequences of youth unemployment.

Table 3 shows also the resultant effect of youth unemployment on the nation's security as the increase of youth vulnerability to radicalization, 248(64.2%) of the respondents agreed, 64(16.5%) were undecided while 74(19.1%) of the respondents disagreed. The result implies that, youth unemployment in Konshisha local government exposes the youths of the area to vulnerability of radicalization, which is the cause of most communal crisis and conflicts in the communities within Konshisha LGA and Benue State at large.

Table 3 revealed that 322(83.4%) of the respondents agreed that, the strain and workload on the law enforcement agencies in Konshisha Local Government Area, Benue State and Nigeria at large is a consequence of the high rate of youth unemployment in the country, 16(4.1%) were undecided, 48(12.4%) of the respondents disagreed. The result therefore implies that, youth unemployment in the country is the cause of the strain on the Nigeria law enforcement and other security outfits in the country.

Similarly, table 3 shows that, the diminished trust on local institutions that ensure peace is as a result of the prevalence of youth unemployment in the country, 179(46.3%) of the respondents agreed, 87(22.5%) were undecided, and 120(31.0%) of the respondents disagreed. This result implies that, youth unemployment erodes trust of citizens on institutions of authority that ensures law and order, this fuels the violation of peace and order in the local communities of the study area.

### **Government Efforts in Youth Employment and National Development from 1999-2024**

Benue State and Konshisha Local Government are grappling with a range of issues, including high unemployment and insecurity. Despite numerous measures by both state and federal governments to address these problems, the situation remains dire. These efforts have not yet



produced positive results and have instead contributed to the rise of crimes such as armed robbery, kidnapping, prostitution, drug trafficking, and political thuggery in the region. In response, the government has implemented various programs and schemes aimed at training, empowering, and providing employment opportunities for the state's youth such as the Poverty Alleviation Programme and National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) under Obasanjo's administration, Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programm (SURE-P) under the Jonathan's administration, and National Social Investment Programme (Npower) under Buhari's administration.

## **Conclusion**

Youth unemployment in Nigeria is endemic and its attendant consequences on both the youth and the entire country cannot be relegated to the background hence the waning of agricultural practices, lingering poverty, hunger, social vices, and insecurity at a very alarming rate have so characterized the Nigerian society. This is because about 70% of the entire Nigeria's 200 Million populace are youths who are majorly graduates and 20 years and above, affecting adversely the workforce utility and security of the country.

Fighting the rising youth unemployment level in Nigeria and the excruciating security situation of the country should be a major task of policymakers' economic managers and all citizens alike. Considering the consequences of the growing youth unemployment rate on the economy and the nation's security, the country cannot afford to despise this menace. Therefore, the need to aptly address this ugly development becomes paramount. While the government takes the leading role in the task of employment generation by providing the necessary enabling environment for economic activities, it is necessary to note that, the battle against unemployment in Nigeria is like war that is too important to be left for the Government alone. As such, all stakeholders should join the fight against this ugly hurdle called unemployment so that the ugly security situation and backward economic situation experienced at present will be put back in the country's history.



## Recommendations

- i. Since it's impractical for the government to provide jobs for all unemployed youths at once, it should support them through skills training and soft loans. This would empower young people to start their own businesses and become employers instead of just job seekers.
- ii. Given that agriculture is central to the economy of Konshisha Local Government and Benue State, the government should implement measures like distributing farming tools, providing soft loans for agricultural activities, and enhancing access to rural markets. These initiatives would encourage youth participation in agriculture as a viable livelihood, helping to address unemployment and reduce rising crime and security issues, particularly in Konshisha Local Government Area.
- iii. The national educational curriculum should be revised to make entrepreneurship and skill acquisition mandatory for all students, from primary to tertiary levels. This approach will help develop the skills necessary for self-sufficiency and employment after graduation, even in the absence of government jobs.
- iv. Government policies in the state and the country generally, should be initiated and implemented in a way that favours trading and investment in the country. This will attract investors into the country which will make for the establishment of industries and other services outlets that will produce jobs for the youths of the country thereby discouraging criminality.

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