

Has the Level of Security Threat Among Unemployed Youth in Sierra Leone On the Increase? What Do You Think Should Be Done to Unlock Job Opportunities for Unemployed Youth?

Sierra Leone'de İşsiz Gençlerin Güvenlik Tehdidi Düzeyi Artıyor mu? İşsiz Gençlere İş Olanaklarının Açılması İçin Ne Yapılması Gerektiğini Düşünüyorsunuz?

Lecturer: Santigie Abu KAMARA

I.P.A.M. –Sierra Leone Üniversitesi

I.P.A.M. – University of Sierra Leone

santigieakamara7@mail.com

ORCID: 0009-0008-6099-1535

Makale Bilgisi / Article Information

Makale Türü / Article Types : Araştırma Makalesi / Research Article

Geliş Tarihi / Received : 26.10.2023

Kabul Tarihi / Accepted : 07.11.2023

Yayın Tarihi / Published : 19.12.2023

Yayın Sezonu / Pub Date Season : Aralık / December

Cilt / Volume : 1 • Sayı / Issue: 2 • Sayfa / Pages: 129-140

Atıf / Cite as

KAMARA, S, A. (2023). Has the Level of Security Threat Among Unemployed Youth in Sierra Leone On the Increase? What Do You Think Should Be Done to Unlock Job Opportunities for Unemployed Youth?. *Disiplinlerarası Afrika Çalışmaları Dergisi*, 1/2 (2023), 129-140.

İntihal / Plagiarism

Bu makale, en az iki hakem tarafından incelendi ve intihal içermediği teyit edildi.

This article has been reviewed by at least two referees and scanned via a plagiarism software.

Yayın Hakkı / Copyright®

Disiplinlerarası Afrika Çalışmaları Dergisi uluslararası, bilimsel ve hakemli bir dergidir. Tüm hakları saklıdır.
Journal of Interdisciplinary African Studies is an international, scientific and peer-reviewed journal.

All rights reserved

Abstract: The most crucial factor for economic development, regional peace, stability, and security is the provision of fundamental amenities like health and education, as well as quality jobs for young people. The situation is getting more severe as the number of young people without jobs rises. Along with being a socioeconomic problem, youth unemployment and the associated underemployment have emerged as a significant political and security concern in Sierra Leone. Both of its realms are where its causes and effects are found. Young people who are non-disabled yet unskilled, jobless, and alienated have been willing to pick up violence in exchange for modest sums of money and the promise of recognition. They are more likely to be swayed by fighting factions or recruited into their ranks. The nation's peace and security have been violated as a result, which has hindered the nation's development.

In an environment of uncertainty and instability, no country can prosper. Investors are drawn to peaceful countries, and investment leads to the creation of jobs. The high unemployment rate has several causes, according to some. These include a high population growth rate, massive rural-urban migration, a Vocational and Technical Education shortage, neglect of agriculture, and corruption.

Keywords: Regional peace, unemployed youth, Sierra Leone, stability, security.

Öz: Ekonomik kalkınmanın, bölgesel barışın, istikrarın ve güvenliğin en önemli unsuru gençlere sağlık ve eğitim gibi temel olanakların yanında kaliteli işlerin sağlanmasıdır. İşsiz gençlerin sayısı arttıkça durum daha da vahimleşmektedir. Sosyoekonomik bir sorun olmasının yanı sıra, genç işsizliği ve buna bağlı eksik istihdam, Sierra Leone’de önemli bir siyasi ve güvenlik kaygısı olarak kendini göstermiştir. Ne tarafından bakarsanız bakın her iki alanda da sebepleri ve sonuçları görürsünüz. Engelli olmayan ancak vasıfsız, işsiz ve ötekileştirilmiş gençler, az miktarlarda para ve tanınma vaadi karşılığında şiddete başvurmaya yöneldiler. Gruplarla savaşıyorlar etkilenmeleri veya onların safına alınmaları daha olasıdır. Bunun sonucunda milletin huzur ve güvenliği ihlal edilmiş, bu da milletin kalkınmasına engel olmuştur. Belirsizlik ve istikrarsızlık ortamında hiçbir ülke gelişemez. Yatırımcılar barışçıl ülkelere çekilmekte ve yatırım istihdam yaratılmasına yol açmaktadır. Bazılarına göre işsizliğin yüksek olmasının çeşitli nedenleri vardır. Bunlar arasında yüksek nüfus artış hızı, kırsaldan kente yoğun göç, Mesleki ve Teknik Eğitim eksikliği, tarımın ihmal edilmesi ve yolsuzluk yer alıyor.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Bölgesel barış, işsiz gençler, Sierra Leone, istikrar, güvenlik.

Introduction

Since the devastating civil war that raged in Sierra Leone from 1991 to 2002, which left thousands of people dead, untold numbers displaced, and the nation’s institutions and economy in ruins, the country has come a long way. According to the World Bank, up to 70% of young people are underemployed or unemployed. This is concerning, given that youth unemployment significantly contributed to the conflict despite solid macroeconomic growth and substantial foreign investment. Concerns have been expressed about the possibility of violence with the presidential elections slated for June 24 and an estimated 1,000,000 young people without jobs being considered as being open to being recruited into violent actions. Recent elections, notably the 2018 presidential election, have seen escalations of youth-led violence and the murder of members of the main opposition All Peoples Congress A.P.C.

Violence broke out last August in Freetown, the nation’s capital, during a street protest organized by an unidentified Sierra Leonean base abroad that believed violence was the only effective way to usher in a new government. Crowds of young men engaged in running battles with the police and set buildings connected to the current regime on fire. The assassination of police officers, members of the Sierra Leone Peoples Party’s present Government, and regular individuals. Both main political parties have included policies geared to

create jobs through human capital development in their manifestos since they believe doing so will be crucial to Sierra Leone's continued recovery from the problem of youth unemployment.

Background

Future generations will likewise be the main drivers of economic growth, but only if policies and initiatives are implemented to expand young people's chances and support smaller families. This tremendous potential might become a terrible momentum as the population increases without adequate infrastructure and public commitment. The most crucial factor for economic development, regional peace, stability, and security is the provision of fundamental amenities like health and education and quality jobs for young people. The situation is getting more severe as the number of young people without jobs rises.

Along with being a socioeconomic problem, youth unemployment and the associated underemployment have emerged as a significant political and security concern in West Africa. Both of its realms are where its causes and effects are found. Young people who are non-disabled yet unskilled, jobless, and alienated have been willing to pick up arms in exchange for modest sums of money along with the promise of recognition, booty, and "wives" and are more likely to be swayed by fighting factions or recruited into their ranks. This "empowerment" has been obtained by criminal groups. Due to their adverse effects on economic performance, investor confidence, and social, physical, and institutional structures, conflict and crime fuel unemployment and fuel conflict and corruption, respectively.

Therefore, an essential strategy for preventing conflict is job creation. In the region spanning from Guinea-Bissau to Cote d'Ivoire, cross-border recruitment of young people into armed conflict is too typical. The problem of youth unemployment in West Africa cannot be resolved on a country-by-country basis alone; it necessitates a regional approach to dealing with its adverse effects and developing a strategy for reversing it. Other regional cross-border problems include small arms, mercenaries, illegal checkpoints, and drug trafficking.

Description of the issue

Complex economic, social, and ethical policy challenges are raised by Sierra Leone's issue with youth unemployment and underemployment. Even though the problem is more prevalent among young people, women, and rural communities, it affects most adults in both urban and rural locations. According to the available data, the job increases in Sierra Leone have not been very significant. Over half of Sierra Leone's youth population is active, with the majority working in agriculture and other unregulated industries. The Experience of underemployment unites both populations. Most of the remaining population

falls under self-employment, primarily in the informal sector. One of the biggest dangers to Sierra Leone's national security is the high youth unemployment that the developing nation is experiencing. Examining how young unemployment in Sierra Leone poses a danger to the country's peace and progress is the focus of this paper.

Investigation's goal of the paper

I performed this study by investigating youth unemployment as a danger to national peace and development in Sierra Leone to deepen our understanding of youth unemployment. The paper aimed to illustrate the trends in youth unemployment and show how it might be viewed as a danger to national development and peace using several variables as evidence.

For a country to develop, there must be peace. Without a doubt, every Sierra Leonean citizen should be accountable for this. Therefore, Sierra Leone youth should be a powerful force for the country's prosperity if channelled adequately because they are the most active group in society. Unemployment among young people undoubtedly affects international peace and a nation's overall development goals. Political and social unrest are encouraged by youth unemployment in this nation. In addition to poverty, unemployment may have a negative psychological impact. Being young and unemployed "can cause loss of motivation and mental health issues and increase the risk of poverty, deskilling, and social exclusion." Moreover, it was mentioned that psychologically speaking, jobless people typically experience trauma, rage, frustration, low self-esteem, negative life satisfaction, sadness, and mental disorders like depression and acute stress. Youth unemployment has been linked in studies to rising drug and alcohol usage among young people and more excellent rates of criminality.

Today's most significant risks to the peace and security of Sierra Leone are young people without jobs. The phenomena have resulted in anarchy, a high crime rate, poverty, and a lack of protection for people and their possessions. To provide youngsters with the skills they need to live purposeful, productive lives, the Federal Government should promote and restructure vocational and technical education. To fulfil the goal for which they were created, such institutions need to be well-equipped.

The Rate of Youth Unemployment and its Effects on National Security

Frustration-Aggression Theory

Theoretical Framework

This theory, which John Dollard and his research associates initially developed in 1939, has been expanded and modified by scholars like Leonard Berkowitz (1962) and Aubrey Yates (1962). It appears to be the most common explanation

for violent behaviour stemming from the inability to fulfil needs. This theory states that aggression is not just undertaken as a natural reaction on instinct as realists and biological theorists assume, but that it is the outcome of frustration and that in a situation where the legitimate desires of an individual are derived either directly or by the indirect consequence of the way the society is structured. The feeling of disappointment may lead such a person to express his anger through violence that will be directed on those he holds responsible or people who are directly or indirectly related to them. In addition, scholars point to the difference between what people feel they want or deserve and what gets the “want-get-ratio” (Feierabends, I.K.R. & Nesvold, B.A., 1969) and the difference between “expected need satisfaction” and “actual need satisfaction” (Davies, C.J., 1962). And where expectation does not meet attainment, the tendency is for people to confront those they hold responsible for frustrating their ambitions. This is the central argument that Ted Robert Gurr’s relative deprivation thesis addressed in saying that “the greater the discrepancy, however marginal, between what is sought and what seems attainable, the greater will be the chances that anger and violence will result” (Gurr, Ted R., 1970, p. 24). An excellent example of how frustration leads to aggression can be seen in the rampant youth unemployment. After the youth population feels that they are getting less than what they deserve from the Government, most of them resort to stealing, terrorism, kidnapping, vandalizing oil pipelines, etc.

Structural Conflict Theory

This theory has two main sub-orientations. The first is the radical structural theory represented by the Marxist dialectical school with exponents like Marx and Engels, V.I., Lenin, etc. The second is the liberal structuralism represented by Ross (1993), Scarborough (1998) and the famous work of Johan Galtung (1990) on structural violence. It is also sometimes similar to transformative theory, which addresses the reactions of individuals, groups, cultures, institutions and societies to change. The main argument of the structural conflict theory is that conflict is built into the particular ways organizations are structured and organized. The theory looks at social problems like political and economic exclusion, injustice, poverty, disease, exploitation, inequity, etc., as sources of conflict. Structuralism maintains that disputes occur because of the exploitative and unjust nature of human societies, the domination of one class by another, etc. This case is made by Friedrich Engels, Karl Marx, Joseph Lenin and Mao Tung (1997), who blame capitalism for being an exploitative system based on its relations of production and the division of society into the proletariat and bourgeoisie. The exploitation of the proletariat and lower classes under capitalism creates conflict (Shedrack, G.B., 2006, p. 41).

Structural theory emphasizes that part of the country’s social problem is youth unemployment, which has degenerated into conflict and affects the efficacy of

national security. The act of exploitation by the Government on the resources of the country, which was supposed to have been a means of creating employment for the unemployed youths, has been a source of conflict (Shedrack, G.B., 2006,

Conceptual Discourse

The concept of unemployment dates from the end of the 19th century and is closely associated with industrialized wage economies. Before that time, persons without work were indiscriminately described as unemployed regardless of the reason. The downturn in the world economy that began in the 1870s and continued until the mid-1890s forced many workers into idleness; such conditions eventually led to a new approach to unemployment, one that emphasized its involuntary nature (Odusola, A.F., 2001). Unemployment is the condition of one capable of working, actively seeking work, but unable to find any work. The International Labour Organization (I.L.O.) defines the unemployed as the economically active population without work but available for and seeking employment, including people who have lost their jobs and those who have voluntarily left work (World Bank, 1998). This definition does not account for a percentage of unemployed youth worldwide. While some developing and developed countries are experiencing higher rates, some are at the moderate/lower level. The Guardian Newspaper reports that in the United Kingdom, the current statistics postulate that the number of jobless youth between 16 and 24 years old is now 1.02 million. The office for the National Bureau of Statistics in the United Kingdom said there were 2.62 million unemployed people in the quarter, the highest total since 1994, which left the unemployment rate at a bigger-than-expected 8.3 percent, the highest since 1996. This means additional young people are churned out of academic institutions with "high hopes" of employment opportunities at the end of the following semester or session. According to the Central Bank of Nigeria (2003), the national unemployment rate rose from 4.3 percent in 1970 to 6.4 percent in 1980. The high unemployment rate observed in 1980 was attributed mainly to depression in the Nigerian economy during the late 1970s. Specifically, the economic downturn led to the implementation of stabilization measures, which included restrictions on exports, which caused import dependency of most Nigerian manufacturing enterprises, resulting in the operation of many companies below their installed capacity (Akintoye, I.R., 2008). This development led to the closedown of many industries while the surviving few were forced to retrench a large proportion of their workforce.

Furthermore, the Nigerian Government also placed an embargo on employment. Notably, from 1980 to 1984, the total disengagement from the Federal Civil Service rose from 2,724 to 6,294 respectively (Akintoye, I.R., 2008). The depression in the economy was caused by the mismanagement of public funds and corruption by the leaders to the detriment of society, which added to the unemployment rate.

Effects of Unemployment on National Security

The level of crime rate in the country is overwhelming. Many unemployed youth have become instruments of evil in the hands of the politicians in perpetuating their hidden agenda before, during and after the election. For instance, in the 2011 presidential election, over 500 lives were lost, including nine Youth Corps members. Thousands of lives and properties were primarily displaced in the northern part of the country. In addition, many ethno-religious crises were perpetuated by the youth. Therefore, the high crime rate weakens national security, threatening lives and properties. Civil Unrest and Internal Aggression It could be recalled that the Arab Spring that happened recently was carried out by restive youths who were frustrated by how their countries were governed. What is the likelihood that the country's rampant youth cannot carry out such a revolution? In addition, we need to recall the role of the restive youth in the Niger/Delta region before the declaration of amnesty by the Federal Government. These youths constituted a menace in society by terrorizing and kidnapping oil workers and foreigners to demand huge ransoms. Many lives and property were lost during the period of their restiveness. Currently, kidnapping is the latest self-employment unemployed youth are engaged in. Several politicians, actors/actresses, young ones, aged, etc., have been victims in the hands of kidnappers. Despite several arrests carried out by the police, the business of kidnapping keeps flourishing every day. Many youth have become "area boys" engaging in nefarious activities and ready evil instruments for the politicians during political activities. Moreover, there has been increased involvement of youth in numerous anti-social activities.

Increase in Cybercrime is a term for any illegal activity that uses a computer as its primary means of commission. The U.S. Department of Justice expands the definition of Cybercrime to include any illegal activity that uses a computer to store evidence. Cybercrime can take many shapes and can occur nearly anytime or any place. Criminals committing Cybercrime use several methods, depending on their skill set and goal. The Council of Europe's Cybercrime Treaty uses the term "cybercrime" to refer to offences ranging from criminal activity against data to content and copyright infringement (Krone, T., 2005). However, Zeviar-Geese (1997) suggests that the definition is broader, including activities such as fraud, unauthorized access, child pornography, and cyberstalking (Zeviar-Geese, G., 1997). The United Nations Manual on the Prevention and Control of Computer-Related Crime includes fraud, forgery, and unauthorized access in its cybercrime definition (United Nations, 1995). Cybercrime's menace has dented the country's image before the international community. On a dip note, in his article concerning a recent study by a research firm, Chatham House.

Youth Employment in Sierra Leone

The special needs of young people are of particular concern to the Government for social and political reasons. On the social development side, people 15–35 are at a disadvantage relative to today's children or adults because they grew up during a war, affecting their human capital development and their transition into adulthood. Rather than spending childhood in school, protected by parents and the community and learning the skills needed to become productive adults, these young people experienced migration, sporadic school attendance, and absent parents or families. Transitioning from childhood to adulthood (heading a household, starting a family of one's own, securing employment to provide for dependents) is a complex process under the best of circumstances; because of the conflict, it is complicated for many young people in Sierra Leone. Holding a job and being able to provide for oneself and one's potential family are essential elements of reaching adulthood. Lack of access to income, delays in family formation, and lack of recognition by society can lead to frustration, hopelessness, and a more significant potential for violence and crime. Political motivations for addressing the needs of young people are also important. Young people are prone to hold governments responsible for their problems when transitioning to adulthood. This phenomenon is not limited to Sierra Leone: youth movements have been vital in forcing government responses worldwide. It can be particularly significant in the volatile environment of recovery from conflict. For these reasons, it is wise for the Government, society, and the international community to understand the situation that young people are facing in Sierra Leone and identify policies to support them better.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Statistics show that many Sierra Leonean youths are unemployed or have low-paying jobs. This is depressing, given that Sierra Leone is a wealthy nation in terms of both human and material resources. If given the chance, the young people should lead the economic growth. Rapping, armed robbery, militancy, online fraud, car snatching, prostitution, murder, cultism, abduction, money laundering, drug trafficking, and other social vices are only a few examples of the constant criminality that results from youth unemployment. Young people engage in these illicit acts as a means of subsistence and a form of protest against the society's mistreatment of them. The nation's peace and security have been violated as a result, which has hindered the nation's development. In an environment of uncertainty and instability, no country can prosper. Investors are drawn to peaceful nations, and investment leads to the creation of jobs. The high unemployment rate has some causes, according to some. These include the high population growth rate, massive rural-urban migration, Vocational and Technical Education shortage, neglect of agriculture, corruption, etc. These notwithstanding, youth unemployment could be curbed by improving

infrastructure in the urban and rural areas, revitalizing some collapsed industries, allocating more money to the education sector, encouraging entrepreneurship, establishing more vocational and technical schools, encouraging agriculture and fighting corruption. For the peace and security of Sierra Leone, Africa, and the global community, a concerted effort must be undertaken to reduce youth unemployment by all parties involved, including the Government at all levels and national and international organizations.

Government and private organizations should regularly hold workshops and seminars with low to no cost for self-employed young people. By addressing the core causes of young unemployment early on, education and skills initiatives can reduce it. Every Government faces budgetary constraints, and they all likely concur that investing in young people who have not yet entered the workforce provides a more extended payback period. This is from the perspective of efficiency. Being proactive is preferable to being reactive. Workplace setting: To expand the number of work prospects for young people, the Government should create a business environment that welcomes domestic and foreign investors. The following conditions must be met for a favourable business climate for long-term youth employment: providing for basic social amenities, political, economic, and institutional stability, effective governance, social interaction, investment in infrastructure, and investment in health care. The most crucial personal quality is a cheerful outlook, which includes being open to new experiences and willing to participate in new activities. Communication skills, honesty/integrity, teamwork skills, a solid work ethic, analytic skills, flexibility/adaptability, interpersonal skills, motivation/initiative, computer skills, organizational skills, leadership abilities, and self-assurance are all examples of employability skills.

- ✓ In addition to promoting youth self-employment and entrepreneurship, entrepreneurship education also helps young people develop the attitudes and abilities, such as greater personal responsibility necessary to deal with the ambiguous employment prospects of modern societies. Young people must have an “entrepreneurial mindset” to start or develop an enterprise culture. They must possess the necessary skills and information to launch a new firm.
- ✓ They must have traits like initiative, responsibility, inventiveness, willingness to take risks, and ability to overcome obstacles. They must know there are alternatives to traditional employment if they make a living. Government and commercial organizations should offer and provide access to interest-free or very low-interest loans.
- ✓ Unemployed young people should only be eligible for loans if they meet specific requirements, such as having a business plan, exhibiting commitment and responsibility, contributing a reasonable amount of

equity, and proving they have the financial means to repay the loan. As a result, the Government should put measures into place to ensure the nation has effective governance.

- ✓ The Government should commit to removing all barriers to economic growth and private enterprise to foster innovation. This includes diversifying away from the oil industry and into other sectors like communication, manufacturing, mining, I.C.T., agriculture, etc., that will improve employment prospects for young people.

References

- Adesina, O. S. (2013). Unemployment and security challenges in Nigeria. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* (3), 7, 146-156 [Online] Available: www.ijhssnet.com/journals/ (September 23, 2015). Adesoji, A. (2010).
- Adetoro, R.A. (2012). Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria is a symptom of poverty and political alienation. *I.O.S.R. Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences (J.H.S.S.)*, (3), 5, 21-26.
- Akwara, A.F., Akwara, N.F. Enwuchola, J., Adekunle, M. & Udaw, J. E. (2013). Unemployment and Poverty: Implications for National Security and Good Governance in Nigeria. *International Journal of Public Administration and Management Research*, (2), 1, 1-11. [Online] Available: <http://www.rcmss.com> (September 24, 2015).
- Alabi, T. (2014). Youths' Unemployment and Crime control: An analysis of Nigerian Experience. *European Scientific Journal*, (10), 2, 301-312. Aleyomi, M. B. (2012). Ethno-religious crisis as a threat to the Stability of Nigeria's federalism. *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa*, (14), 3, 127-140. Leonard Berkowitz (1962) and Aubrey Yates (1962).
- Anyanwu, J. C. (2014). Does intra-African Trade Reduce Youth Unemployment in Africa, in: *African Development Review*, (26), 2, 286- 309
- Aremu, M.A. and Ahmed Y. A. (2011), An Investigation of Security and Crime Management in Developing Society: The Implications for Nigeria Democratic Set-Up. *Int. J. Acad. Res. Bus. Soc. Sci.* (3), 1, 390-399.
- Awogbenle, A.C. and Iwuamadi K.C. (2010). Youth Unemployment: Entrepreneurship Development Programme as an Intervention Mechanism. *African Journal of Business Management*, (4), 6, 831-835.
- M. R. and Omid. (2013). Does Frustration Cause Aggression? Case study: soccer fans in Iran. *International Research Journal of Applied and Basic Sciences*, (4), 10, 3028-3035. National Bureau of Statistics. (2009).
- Nedeljkovic, V. (2014). Consequences of high youth unemployment [Online] Available: <http://www.bridgingeurope.net/consequences-of-high-youth-unemployment.html> (June 6, 2015).
- Njoku A and Ihugba O (2011). Unemployment and Nigerian Economic Growth, Proceedings of the 2011 International Conference on Teaching, Learning and Change [Online] Available: www.hrmars.com (September 21, 2015)
- Odeh, M. A. (2011). Deregulation policy in the downstream oil sector and the Nigerian economy, *Journal of Social Science and Public Policy*, (3), 87-100.
- Ojo, L. B., Alaka A. B and Odozi A. F. (2014). Entrepreneurship Education: A Viable Tool for Youth Empowerment in Nigeria, *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, (3) 4, 11-20. [Online] Available: www.mcser.org (September 21, 2015).
- Okafor, E.E. (2011). Youth Unemployment and Implications for Stability of Democracy in Nigeria, *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa*, (13) 1, 358-373 [Online]. Available: www.jsd-africa.com/jsda/ (September 23, 2015).

- Social Statistics in Nigeria. Abuja: The NBS Publication. National Bureau of Statistics. (2010). Statistical News: Labor Force Statistics No. 476. Abuja: The NBS Publication National Bureau of Statistics. (2011). 2011 Annual Socio-Economic Report. [Online] Available: resourcedat.com (September 21, 2015).
- The Boko Haram Uprising and Islamic Revivalism in Nigeria. *Africa Spectrum*, 45, 2, 95-108, [Online] Available: www.africa-spectrum.org (January 7, 2013).
- Umejei, E. (2010). Kidnapping in 'Kidnapped' Economy [Analysis]. *Africa News Service*. [Online] Available: Emekaumejei's Weblog (September 23, 2015)