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Self-Reliance as a Panacea to Youth Unemployment in Nigeria: The Islamic Approach

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Abstract

Rising youth unemployment in Nigeria is a serious issue of concern with solution measures being taken every now and then, yet, the problem persists. Self-reliance as a means of combating unemployment has become an essential model in contemporary time. While substantial studies on reducing youth unemployment have been undertaken by researchers in Nigeria but most of these were based on conventional perspectives devoid of religious teachings, thus overlooking the fact that religion is a vital facet of nearly all societies including Nigeria and that religion shapes the mind-set its adherents have toward hard work, consumption, individual duty, and planning for the future. Consequently, many youth in Nigeria do not recognize their religious responsibility to be self-reliant and economically sovereign. Besides, studies on Islamic teachings on self-reliance as a strategy for reducing unemployment are scarce. This study therefore examines the Islamic approach to self-reliance as means of combating youth unemployment in Nigeria. The study is a literature survey and presentation and is based on teachings from the Qur'ān(the sacred words of Allah) and the Sunnah(the sayings, deeds and tacit approvals of Prophet Muhammad, may peace be upon him) and on the writings of prominent scholars, as well other contemporary writers. The study confirms that the concept of self- reliance as an avenue for fighting unemployment is entrenched in Islam and that Islam disapproves idleness. The study identifies belief in Allah and invoking Him, and work and struggles through Shari'āh approved means as the Islamic approaches to self-reliance.

Keywords: Islam; Nigeria; Self-reliance; Unemployment; outh.

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1. Introduction

Nowadays, unemployment among the youth has become an issue of serious concern to people, organizations and the governments across the world. This is probably due to the pervasive nature and consequences of the problem. Reference [1] asserted that one of the world's most enveloping economic and social challenges is the growing numbers of young people in almost all countries and regions who are having complexity entering the work force and establishing themselves in sustainable career and that high rates of youth unemployment represents both widespread personal calamity for individuals and lost opportunity for significant national and global economic development.

Nigeria is not an exception to this global problem of increasing youth unemployment. According to [2] the ages 15-24 and 25-35 represents the youth population in the labor force in Nigeria and unemployment rate for persons in the age group of 15-24 unemployment rate rises from 21.5% in first quarter 2016 to 24% in second quarter 2016. For persons in the age group of 25-34, the unemployment rate also rose from 19.9 % in first quarter 2016, to 20.5% in second quarter 2016.

Even though the youths are not the only employable class in the demographic structure, the significance of youth unemployment cannot be over-emphasized. The issue of unemployment among youths is accountable for all conducts of social pathologies not slightest of which are violence, crime and criminality [3].

In Nigeria, many strategies have been instituted to overcome the problem of unemployment in the country including youth unemployment especially by the government. The establishment of the National Directorate of Employment (NDE), introduction of vocational and skills acquisitions centers, establishment of entrepreneurship centers in institutions of higher learning, etc. represent the strategies for curbing the problem of unemployment.

But personal observation reveals that despite the efforts made in curbing unemployment particularly among youth in Nigeria, the problem of youth unemployment still persists in the country.

In view of the apparent failure of these unemployment strategies to yield the desired result, the concept of self-reliance is now viewed as an alternative towards reducing youth unemployment in Nigeria. According to [4] self-reliance has become a model vital to Nigeria's policy in recent years.

Literature review indicated that substantial studies on reducing youth unemployment have been undertaken by researchers in Nigeria but most of these were based on conventional perspectives devoid of religious teachings. Besides, studies on Islamic teachings on self-reliance as a strategy for reducing unemployment among youth in Nigeria are scarce. Thus a gap exists which this study fills.

1.1 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are:

- I. To identify the Islamic approaches to self-reliance as ways of solving unemployment and particularly youth unemployment in Nigeria.
- II. To reinvigorate the mind -set of the youth particularly the Nigerian Muslim youth on self-reliance using Islam divine doctrines.

1.2. Significance of the Study

Religion is a vital facet of nearly all societies and that religion shapes the mind-set its adherents have toward hard work, consumption, individual duty, and planning for the future [5]. Therefore examining the Islamic teachings toward self-reliance and bringing them out is envisaged to reinvigorate the mind -set of the youth particularly the Nigerian Muslim youth on self-reliance.

Islam does not permit individuals to throw away their human and physical wealth and institutional stipulation can be set in place to return individual from such manners. Society can define an Islamic economic man and lay down the qualification that would make an Islamic man to behave as an Islamic economic man in his economic quest [6] and thus another significance of the study.

2. Materials and methods

The paper is a literature survey and presentation and is based on teachings from the Qur'ān(the sacred words of Allah) and the Sunnah(the sayings, deeds and tacit approvals of Prophet Muhammad for an action, may peace be upon him) and on the writings of prominent scholars, as well other contemporary writers.

2.1. The Concept of Unemployment

The International Labor Organization's (1982) work cited in [7] stated that unemployment or joblessness happens when people are with no jobs and they have vigorously sought work within the past five weeks.

In the words of [3], unemployment exists once a fit and eligible person does not hold a job or work to perform for some reward. In the words of [7] a person who cannot either join an enterprise or create a job is unemployed.

According to [8], unemployment means a lack of income and therefore a lack of demand. He further described types of unemployment as follows:

- I. Frictional Unemployment. This is caused by immobility of labor amid jobs and it still happens during full employment.
- II. Seasonal Unemployment. In a few industries demand for labor is reduced in definite periods of the year, for example harvesting of agricultural products, etc.
- III. Structural Unemployment. This occurs from as a result of permanent changes in the industrial makeup of a country. There is change in demand for labor due changes in the country's industrial makeup.
- IV. Cyclical Unemployment. This is characterized by a broad deficiency in demand, and it happens if there is a common economic gloominess. It is frequently called as mass unemployment.

Knowing the types of unemployment can shed some light on why unemployment occurs and what can be done on it.

2.2 The Concept of Self-reliance

According to [9] self-reliance is the social and economic capability of a person, a household or a community to meet up necessary needs in a sustainable way and with self-respect. According to Emerson's (1841) work cited in [10] states that self-reliance stressed the trust in one's current view, skills, originality, belief in own abilities, and genius and living from inside.

They further stated that translated to people this philosophical concept takes a little special course emphasizing the power of independence, creativity, originality and belief in power and resilience.

Furthermore, Emerson's (1841) work cited [10] states that the concept of self-reliance rejects the need for external support and glorifies the value of self-application, for example tilling of the land to obtain the kernel of nourishing corn.

2.3 Self-Reliance in Islam

The Islamic economic system rejects idleness, encourages work and productivity by engaging in Shari'ah approved activities for a living. In Islam, there is not a day off from worldly work.

For example, Friday on which the weekly prayer is set for Muslims is not a day off from worldly work. In the Qur'an Allāh (The Exalted) said "And when the prayer is finished, Then may ye disperse through the land, And seek of the Bounty Of God: and celebrate the Praise of God Often (and without stint): that ye may prosper" [11]. Also Allāh says " And seek (the betterment of) the Ultimate Abode with what has given to you, and do not neglect your share from this world, and do good as Allāh did good to you, and do not seek to make mischief in the land, surely Allāh does not like the mischief makers" [11].

In a hadith narrated by Abū Huraira(may Allāh be pleased with him): Allah's Apostle(peace be upon him) said, "one would rather cut and carry a bundle of wood on his back than ask somebody who may or not give him" [12].

In a hadith narrated by 'Ā'isha (May Allāh be pleased with her and her father): "the companions of Allāh's Apostle used to practice manual labor, so their sweat used to smell, and they were advised to take a bath" [12].

The fundamental attitude of Islam towards man's position in the world is that Allah (The Exalted) has made the earth for his advantage. He has granted him control over it. In that case it becomes man's responsibility to benefit for this favor and to exert himself to Allah's Bounty.

It is not approved for a Muslim to stay idle, doing nothing to earn a living on the excuse of giving his time to worship or putting trust in Allāh. Furthermore, it is not acceptable for him to depend on charity while he is able

to earn an adequate subsistence for himself and his family by means of his personal efforts [4].

The objective of Islam is to make man useful for society and undertake beneficial activities [6]

2.4. Youth

Youth is a demographic structure generally recognized.

The National Youth Development Policy's (2001) work cited in [13] states that the youth are the foundation of a community, their energies, inventiveness, character and orientation define the pattern of development and security of a nation. Through their creative talent and labor power, a nation makes giant strides.

The youth are a particular segment of the national population that is sensitive, energetic, and active and the most productive phase of life as citizens.

In the Qur'an, Allah, the Exalted, has narrated a story and mentioned youth. He says "We relate to thee their story in truth: they were youth who believed in their lord, And We advanced them guidance [11].

2.5. Youth Unemployment in Nigeria and Its Main Causes

[1] asserts that one of the world's most enveloping economic and social challenges is the growing numbers of young people in almost all countries and regions who are having complexity entering the work force and establishing themselves in sustainable career and that high rates of youth unemployment represents both widespread personal calamity for individuals and lost opportunity for significant national and global economic development. Even though the youths are not the only employable class in the demographic structure, the significance of youth unemployment cannot be over-emphasized.

The issue of unemployment among youths is accountable for all conducts of social pathologies not slightest of which are violence, crime and criminality [3]. Many factors were mentioned as responsible for youth unemployment in Nigeria and some of these factors are discussed below:

- I. According to [13], one factor responsible for unemployment among the youth in Nigeria is the view of policy makers and the youth themselves about employment. To both the policy makers and the youth, employment means a work with salary and working for someone else. It is this view that has continued to influence the institutions in Nigeria that provide skills and training. Based on this, curricula and training programs are customized towards preparing young people for formal sector jobs. Since these jobs do not exist, there is frequently divergence between the skills possessed by job seekers and the accessible jobs.
- II. Lack of experience and qualifications that address employers' risk in making hiring promise. Many employers are skeptical about young people's capability to apply the skills they learn in schools to the practical challenges of the workplace. They also query the social skills and work ethic of youth. They see these deficits as a serious obstacle to the efficiency of inexperienced young people and at same time

they are unwilling to put resources in training young people when more experienced adult workers may be unemployed and able for hire[1]

- III. Cultural factors and get rich quick condition. In Nigeria, culturally, a lot of youths and their parents consider that the only sure way to success is pursuing career in the elitist professions like medicine, engineering, accountancy, regardless of whether they have the ability, interest or resources. People perceived artisans and craftsmen as social outcasts who should remain permanently at the bottom of the socio-economic ranking [7].

2.6. Youth Unemployment Statistics

The ages 15-24 and 25-35 represents the youth population in the labor force and unemployment rate for persons in the age group 15-24 was 24% in second quarter 2016, 21.5% in first quarter 2016, 19% in fourth quarter 2015 and 17,8% in third quarter.

For persons with the age group of 25-34, the unemployment rate also rose from 19.9 % in first quarter 2016, to 20.5% in second quarter 2016, up from 11.4 % in fourth quarter 2016 from 10,8% in third quarter 2015 from 8.9% in second quarter 2015 and 8.2% in first quarter 2015[2].

2.7. Islamic Strategies to Self-reliance as a Means of Employment

- I. Invocations of Allāh(the Glorified). A Muslim is a man of belief and action. It is Muslim's belief that Allāh is the provider, the cherisher, sustainer and that Allāh is to be asked for everything. Thus a Muslim is required to put his trust in Allāh and make a lot of invocations of Allah. Allāh (The Exalted) says "And your Lord says call on me I will answer your (prayer)" [11].
- II. Engaging in trade. Islam has given priority to trade and thus it has legislated on trade Allah says "Allāh has approved trade and prohibited riba"[11]. By engaging in trading one can obtain his livelihood and even contribute to the well being of his society as trading provide accessibility to needed goods and services. [14] asserted that before revelation came to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) he earned his living as trader.
- III. Engaging in agricultural activities. In a hadith narrated by Anas bin Malik(may Allāh be pleased with him) : Allah's Apostle (peace be upon him) said, " there is none amongst the Muslims who plants a tree or sows seeds and then a bird, or a person or an animal eats from it, but is regarded as a charitable gift for him"[12]. This hadith was reported under the superiority of sowing seeds and planting trees if some of the product is eaten (by people or animals). This means that when a Muslim engages in farming activities for monetary reasons he is equally getting reward when his product is eaten by people or animals. In a hadith reported narrated by Abū Huraira(may Allāh be pleased with him) the Prophet(peace be upon him) said, " Allāh did not send any prophet but shepherded sheep" His companions asked him, " Did you do the same?" Yes, I used to shepherd the sheep of the people of Mecca for some Qirāts," One Qirat equals 1/6 of Dirham [12].
- IV. Engaging in handcrafts and manual labor. In a hadith narrated by Al-Miqdām(May Allāh be pleased with him): The prophet said, " Nobody has ever eaten a better meal than that which he has earned by

working with his own hands. The prophet Allāh, David (Dauda)(May Allāh's blessing be upon him) used to eat from the earnings of his manual labor," [12]. In a hadith narrated by Abū Huraira(may Allāh be pleased with him): Allah's Apostle(peace be upon him) said, "one would rather cut and carry a bundle of wood on his back than ask somebody who may or not give him"[12].

3. Results

The study reveals that idleness is rejected in Islam and a Muslim is enjoined to be self-financing and to stay away from being burden on anybody. Islam requires the Muslims to struggle and work through trading, engaging in agricultural activities, and undertakes handcraft and manual labor to obtain livelihood. Above all, Islam enjoins invoking of Allāh(the Glorified) for all that one needs. The study further shows that Islam respects all kinds of occupation as means of livelihood so long as there is no mixed up of an element that is forbidden by it.

4. Limitation of the study

The limitation of the study lies on the inability of the authors to name classes of the ahadith quoted. In Islam, ahadith are classified in numerous ways such as, according to a hidden defect found in the chain of narrators or text of a hadith, according to the reliability and memory of the reporters, etc.

5. Conclusion and recommendation

Growing youth unemployment is worrisome in Nigeria and requires solution for the reason that rising youth unemployment, represents missing latent for national economic change, and high numbers of economically aggravated youth might contribute to social instability.

One fundamental solution to the problem of youth unemployment in Nigeria is to transform the youth to be self-reliant based on Islamic divine instructions.

Religion shapes the mind-set its adherents have toward hard work, individual duty, etc. Islam approves Self-reliance and teaches individuals to struggle to earn a living in acceptable way. Islam refuses idleness and laziness.

It is recommended that youth should follow Islamic teachings on the need to be self-reliant and struggle to earn a living so as to protect their dignity, economically developed to have in spending for social causes, to have opportunity and have hand in zakat(poor rate) giving, and answer Allah's command for doing good.

According to [4] to realize self-reliance however, equilibrium has to be maintained between earnings and everyday expenditure, between wishes and aspirations, between creating riches and keeping it, between a honest evaluation of monetary situation and monetary self-deceit, between standard of living and quality of life and between contentment and achievement.

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