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# **Rising youth unemployment and poverty in Nigeria: the challenges for national security**

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## ***Abstract***

*The interest of this paper is to examine the challenge of rising youth unemployment and poverty on national security in Nigeria. The paper assumes relevance in a situation of rising youth unemployment and poverty accompanied by high wave of insecurity in the country. The piece concern itself with furthering the discussion on this complex problem by highlighting the vicious circle between youth unemployment and poverty and the effect of such on the fight against insecurity in Nigeria. A descriptive approach was adopted with vivid analysis in line with the objective. It was reiterated that as paramount as security is for harmonious co-existence, economic prosperity, and national unity needed for global competitiveness, Nigeria's security is seriously challenged by key factors of rising youth unemployment and poverty. Reviving/Building of industries to reduce unemployment, training youths to be entrepreneurs/employable, and making agriculture attractive are among the suggested solutions.*

**Keywords:** *national security, Nigeria, poverty, youth unemployment*

## **1.0 Introduction**

The related phenomena of unemployment and poverty have remained among the major global socio-economic problems. Not only are the difficulties caused by these (individually or as a duo) telling so much on the global community, and worst on the less advanced parts, but their rising trends is becoming more worrisome. According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) (2022), global unemployment is projected to stand at 207 million in 2022, surpassing its 2019 level by 21 million. And worst is youth unemployment. The ILO (2022) declared that, the share of youth not in employment, education or training in 2020 rose to 23.3% in 2022. Attributing this rise to the Covid-19 pandemic, it noted that the pandemic has caused many additional problems for 15 to 24-year-olds who have experienced much higher unemployment losses than older workers.

In the less advanced region of Africa, youth unemployment rate which was put at 12.7% in 2020 (i.e., over one in five young people in Africa were not in employment, education, or training (NEET)) has been deteriorating since then (ILO, 2022). The situation gets very bad in Nigeria where unemployment rate rose from 23.13% in 2018 to as high as 33.3% in 2020; with youth unemployment standing at 19.61% in 2020 (National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), 2021).

In terms of poverty, Nigeria has been competing to maintain the title of the “world's poverty capital (WPC)”. In 2018, Nigeria surpassed India to this title, with almost 87 million people living in extreme poverty, compared with India’s 73 million. However, by 2021, India became the WPC with about 83 million Indians been plunged into extreme poverty as compared to 70 million Nigerians in the same situation. Statistics by the NBS (2019) show that, 40.1% of Nigeria’s total population (excluding Borno State) were classified as poor. In other words, on average, 4 out of 10 Nigerians have real per capita expenditures below 137,430 Naira per year. This translates to over 82.9 million Nigerians who are considered poor by national standards. This has gone worse as the World Bank report (2022) asserts that the number of poor persons in Nigeria will rise to 95.1 million in 2022 from 89.0 million in 2020. This would mean that 6.1 million more persons would have fallen beneath the poverty line between 2020 and 2022, a 6.7% increase.

On the security front, Nigeria is equally not faring well. The country is becoming increasingly insecure. There are violent outbreaks constantly been recorded. The list include banditry commonly in the northwest and northeast, rebels in the northeast, violent separatist movements in the southeast, and gang wars in the southwest and southeast. There are also extrajudicial killings, farmers-herders crisis, and communal clashes witnessed across the country which are exacerbating security and socio-economic challenges in the country. This insecurity has continued to deepen with new cases and rising deaths regularly recorded.

With Nigeria experiencing worst economic downturns over a long time, and the mutual reinforcing nature of these problems – youth unemployment and poverty – creating a vicious circle, portends a dire social, political, and economic consequences for the country. As Jato (2018) had observed, the popular old maxim which says “a hungry man is an angry man” might sound simple and often neglected, but has much meaning than it is probably commonly used. Also, there is a saying that: “an idle mind is a devil’s workshop.” These sayings simply summarises the correlation between man’s wellbeing and economic usefulness and his behaviour (i.e., actions and reactions). In such situations of unemployment and poverty, the struggle to survive, and at all means, may undermine the security of others and the general national security. As such, the security challenges that Nigeria currently faces are not unconnected to these problems of youth unemployment and poverty. And these security challenges begets yet other waves of youth unemployment and poverty, thus creating a vicious circle that is hard to break.

Utilizing basically secondary data from secondary sources, using descriptive methods, this chapter x-rayed the growing rates of youth unemployment and poverty in Nigeria over time, highlighted the security situation in Nigeria, and attempted a link youth unemployment and poverty and insecurity in Nigeria.

## **2.0 Conceptual Clarifications**

The cardinal concepts of this work do not call for much attempts of clarification here since they are already well-addressed ones. However, a little is done to introduce them as in the way herein used.

### **2.1 Youth Unemployment**

Unemployment is said to be a condition in which a person who is able to work (i.e., in the labor force) and is actively looking for a paid job, but cannot find one. That is someone is said to be unemployed when s/he does not have a job but is willing to, able to, and actively seeking work. Youth unemployment (YU) is, therefore, a situation where young people within the age range being defined as youth (e.g., 15–24 years old, by the United Nations) who are willing and able to work and are searching for a job, but cannot find one (Jato, 2022). Also, youth unemployment, could be described as the conglomerate of youths with diverse background, willing and able to work, but cannot find any; or cannot find the type of job that they are trained to do, and which they will be proud to do as their area of expertise (Uddin & Uddin, 2013).

### **2.2 Poverty**

Literature on the definitions of *poverty* is vast. Such definitions see poverty as lack of basic necessities of life including freedom, the state of vulnerability and the feeling of low self-esteem and rejection. It is a deprivation or denial of basic choices and opportunities needed for decent standards to live a long, healthy, constructive life and to participate in the society's affairs. Poverty thus mean suffering from any or a combination of the above-mentioned displeasing, derogatory and inhuman situations that tend to demean life either in absolute or relative manner (Jato & Otto, 2016; Jato & Kalu, 2016).

Based on the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), which intended to measure acute poverty in terms of both the proportion of experiencing multiple deprivations and the intensity of such deprivations, poverty expresses an individuals' experiences with health, education, and standard of living (via traditional development indicators, like the availability of clean drinking water, and whether the home has a proper floor) (Deonandan, 2019).

Gweshengwe and Hassan (2020) also viewing poverty from the multidimensionality and complexity of it, assert that, poverty has financial, economic, social, environmental and seasonal dimensions which interlink and reinforce each other. They extend definition of poverty to cover its absolute (acute deprivation) and relative (how poor one is in comparison to other people in a society), taking it further to age, gender and context.

From the above perspectives, the summary by Chambers cited in Jato (2016) puts poverty in four (4) clusters of meanings which are: (1) income-poverty or its common proxy (because less unreliable to measure) consumption-poverty; (2) material lack or want, which, besides income, includes lack of or little wealth and lack or low quality of other assets such as shelter, clothing, furniture, personal means of transport, radios or television, and so on. This also tends to include no or poor access to services; (3) capability deprivation, referring to what we can or cannot do, can or cannot be. This includes but goes beyond material lack or want to include human capabilities, for example skills and physical abilities, and also self-respect in society; and (4) a more broadly multi-dimensional view of deprivation, with material lack or want as only one of several mutually reinforcing dimensions. For broadness, therefore, any of these clusters the seeks to identify the deviation from the expected minimum wellbeing of an individual is acceptable as a poverty.

### **2.3 National Security**

In conceptualizing security, the absence of threats to peace, stability, national cohesion, political and socio-economic objectives of a country have been emphasized by many scholars, who view security as a dynamic condition which involves the relative ability of a state to counter threats to its core values and interest (Okonkwo et al., 2015). By this perspective, the opposite of security – insecurity – is linked to such situations as: lack of certainty; danger; lack of protection and the state of anxiety or fear resulting from a concrete or perceived lack of protection (Okonkwo et al., 2015).

Therefore, the ability of the state to protect its citizens from hunger, poverty, ignorance, disease, and all forms of defenselessness is defined as national security. This includes safeguarding citizens against all types of social, political, ecological, territorial, and cosmic threats. As a result, national security is synonymous with and denotes physical safety of individuals and groups, as well as freedom from threats, anxiety, or danger (Zhema & Adihikon, 2020). Comparatively, while the traditional notion of national security stressed national integrity and sovereignty as the core values that deserve utmost protection, human

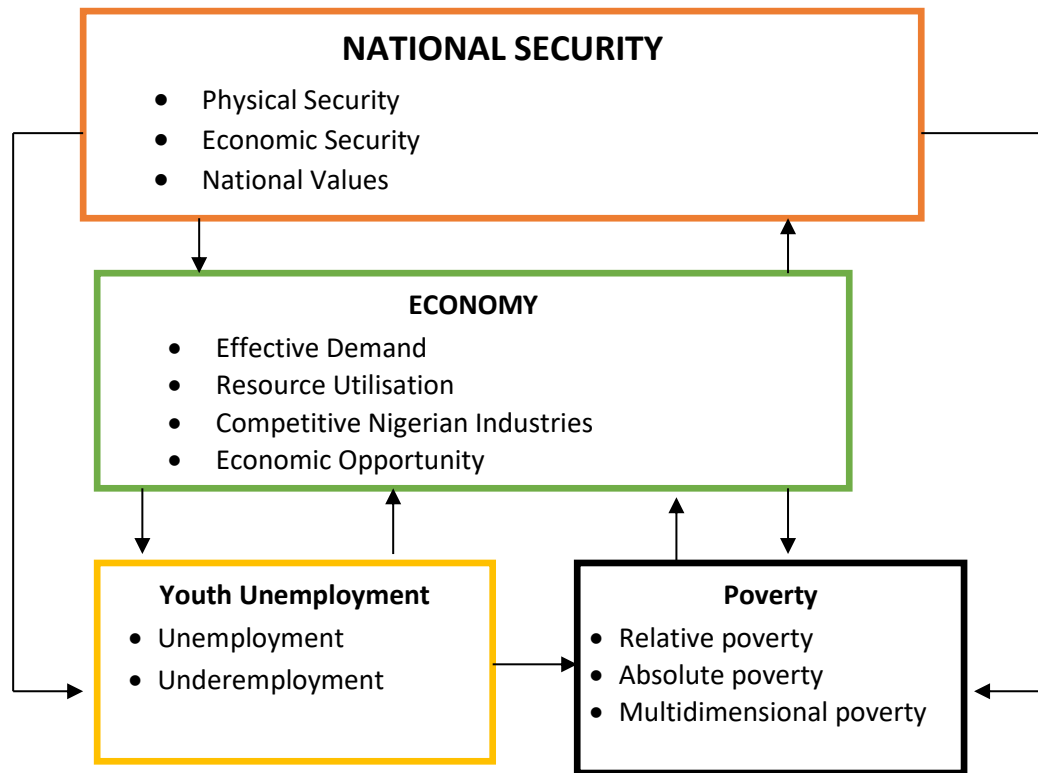
security, on the other hand, dwells on the protection and happiness of all persons all over the world, be it at homes, workplace, in the streets, and their communities (Akwen & Jato, 2021).

National security is therefore a state or condition where state most cherished values and beliefs, democratic way of life, institutions of governance and unity, welfare and well-being as a nation and people are permanently protected and continuously enhanced. National security thus viewed is not only appropriate and aggressive blend of political resilience and maturity, but that of human resources, economic structure and capacity, technological competence, industrial base and availability of natural resources and finally the military might for the benefit of the citizenry.

#### **2.4 Conceptual Framework**

Knitted together in a complex and reinforcing nature is the relationship between unemployment (youth unemployment at its heart), poverty and national security. As conceptually depicted in Figure 1, youth unemployment leads to poverty as the unemployed person has no income with which to meet his basic needs of food, cloth, shelter, health, and education. Unemployed youth are then most likely to be poor. These (i.e., youth unemployment poverty) exert their influence on the economy by affecting the effective demand, resource utilisation, industrial competitiveness, and other economic opportunities that can place an economy in a global advantage position. Upsetting these economic conditions, youth unemployment and poverty set in motions of economic mishaps and turmoil that cause more unemployment and poverty. These biting economic conditions spark disturbances (insecurity) in the national security system affecting the physical security of life and property, economic security of stable income/other valuable resources that guarantee the ability to consistently meet people's needs, and then leads to breakdown of national values of equity, fairness and justice, and in their place, the values of "survival of the fittest", "the ends justify the means", etc., are enthroned. The distorted values then set in negative motions that further affects the economy, which further exacerbates unemployment and poverty. And the vicious circle goes on.

In another way, the state of national security determines the rate of unemployment and poverty. A secured nation has less numbers of people in unemployment and poverty; whereas a nation with insecurity tends to have higher rates of unemployment and poverty.



Source: Author's design

Figure 1: Conceptual framework

Thus, Figure 1 gives an overall relation between youth unemployment, poverty and insecurity that is akin to the situation in Nigeria, and from which inference can be drawn to explain the Nigerian phenomenon.

### 3.0 Trends of Youth Unemployment, Poverty and Insecurity in Nigeria

Let take a look at the movements in the variables under consideration. Thus, discussed here are the trends of the youth employment, poverty and insecurity in Nigeria.

#### 3.1 Youth Unemployment in Nigeria

Data from the International Labour Organization (ILO) database, hosted by with World Bank, 2022 and corroborated by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) (2021), reveals that Nigeria's unemployment rate combined is 33.3% as at 2020 which has remained that high. The data also reveals that the worst-hit are Nigerian youths with 19.67% unemployment rate (see Table 1). This, according to the NBS (2021) corresponds to over 13.9 million currently unemployed. This rose from 13.1 million Nigerian youths in Q3 2018, the last time the report was released. Youth between the ages 15–24 have about 6.8 million Nigerians out of jobs and another 7.1

million also unemployed. The highest unemployment rate was recorded for youths between 15–24 years (40.8%). This is followed by ages 25–34 years at 30.7%.

To show the enormity of this figure, the Nigeria’s unemployed youth of 13.9 million is comparatively more than the population of Rwanda and several other African countries. Youth population is also about 64% of total unemployed Nigerians, suggesting that the most agile working-class population in the country remains unemployed. An estimated 2.5 million of new labour force enters the nation’s labour market every year with 60% (1.5 million) of the new entrants being youths (including graduates) who possess only paltry job experience and skills (Adesugba & Mavrotas, 2016).

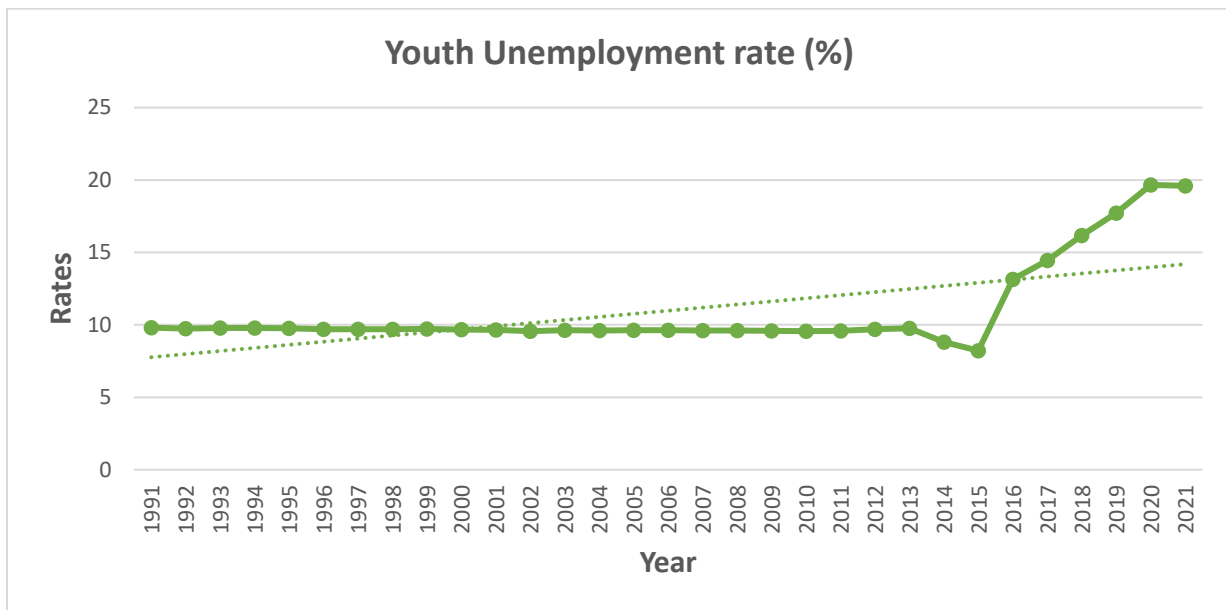
Values in Table 1 (plotted by Figure 2) show the movement in the numbers of unemployed youths in Nigeria over time (1991-2021). This, in percentages, fluctuated between 9% on an average from 1991 to 2015 and came to as low as 8.218% in 2015. However, it got worse in 2016 when the country was hit by an economic recession. This resulted in over 13% of the youth being unemployed. And since then, it has been getting worse, and was aggravated by the impact of COVID-19 which took the figure to as high as 19.67% in 2020. It dropped insignificantly to 19.67% in 2021.

**Table 1:**  
*Youth Unemployment Rate, 1991–2021*

Year	Youth Unemployment Rate (%)	Year	Youth Unemployment Rate (%)
1991	9.814	2007	9.611
1992	9.753	2008	9.605
1993	9.788	2009	9.587
1994	9.777	2010	9.576
1995	9.76	2011	9.58
1996	9.704	2012	9.697
1997	9.700	2013	9.77
1998	9.695	2014	8.804
1999	9.711	2015	8.218
2000	9.677	2016	13.135
2001	9.658	2017	14.454
2002	9.572	2018	16.175
2003	9.628	2019	17.72
2004	9.609	2020	19.665
2005	9.631	2021	19.608
2006	9.622		

*Source:* International Labour Organization database, with World Bank, 2022.





**Figure 2:** Youth Unemployment Rate, 1991–2021.

A distribution of the youth unemployment rate according to level of education shows that NCE/OND and Nursing recorded an unemployment rate of 30.8%; that amongst second-degree holders (M.Sc./M.S/M.AdM.) stood at 22.9%, and it is 23.3% for Doctorate degree holders.

As the working-age population in Nigeria is estimated to increase rapidly in absolute terms by some 66 million people between 2010 and 2030 (World Bank, 2015), we are sure that, *ceteris paribus*, more and more youths will go without jobs in coming years if nothing drastic is done to check this ugly trend.

### 3.2 Poverty Profile in Nigeria

The first of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations Agenda 2030 targets poverty reduction; a recognition of the dire consequences of poverty and an indication that the fight against poverty is given its priority place in the global arena. However, in Nigeria, the poverty rate has persistently been high and in 2019, the World Bank ranked Nigeria as having the second-highest rate of poverty globally, after India (World Bank, 2019) and the United Nations Economic and Social Development Affairs (UNDESA, 2019) reported that Nigeria, alongside the Democratic Republic of Congo, account for 23% of the world’s poor.

The poverty situation in Nigeria greatly contrasts with her human and natural resources and other potentials. The country is said to be richly endowed with human and natural resources, Africa’s biggest oil producer, and with a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) base greater than any African country<sup>1</sup>. However, the statistics of the population of Nigerians still grimly show a close to half of the population (i.e., 40%) in poverty (NBS, 2019) and 63% percent of the population (i.e., 133 million people) to be multidimensionally poor (NBS, 2022). The NBS (2012), like many others, had wondered this ironic situation saying: “It remains a paradox however, that despite the fact that the Nigerian economy is growing, the proportion of Nigerians living in poverty is increasing every year, although it declined between 1985 and 1992, and between 1996 and 2004.”

According to the NBS (2019), 40% of Nigeria’s total population (i.e., almost 83 million people) live below the country’s poverty line of 137,430 naira (\$381.75) per year. As can be seen in Table 2 (and the accompanying Figure 3), poverty incidence had risen from 27.2% in 1980 to 46.3% in 1985, dropped to 42.7% in 1992 and rose to 65.6% in 1996. It again fell to 54.4% in 2004 and climbed again to 69.0% in 2010 only to dip in 2019 to 40.1%. However, the movement, as indicated by the trend line in Figure 3, shows an increasing incidence of poverty over time. This can also be seen in another way from the population in poverty. It raised from 17.1 million people in 1980 to 34.7 million people in 1985. By 2010, 112.47 million people were deemed relatively poor with a drop to 89.2 million people in 2019. While this 2019 figure is still high (given the population), the poverty rate in absolute terms, which is as high as 82.9% (see World Bank, 2022), reveals that more Nigerians are in poverty if considered absolutely.

**Table 2:**  
*Poverty Headcount from 1980-2019<sup>2</sup>*

<b>Year</b>	<b>Poverty Incidence (%)</b>	<b>Estimated Population (Million)</b>	<b>Population in poverty (Million)</b>
1980	27.2	65	17.1
1985	46.3	75	34.7
1992	42.7	91.5	39.2
1996	65.6	102.3	67.1
2004	54.4	126.3	68.7
2010	69.0	163	112.47

<sup>1</sup> At least as at 2021.

<sup>2</sup> 2019 provides the latest official poverty rates in Nigeria.

2019	40.1	201	89.2
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Source: NBS (2012 & 2020) and World Bank (2022).

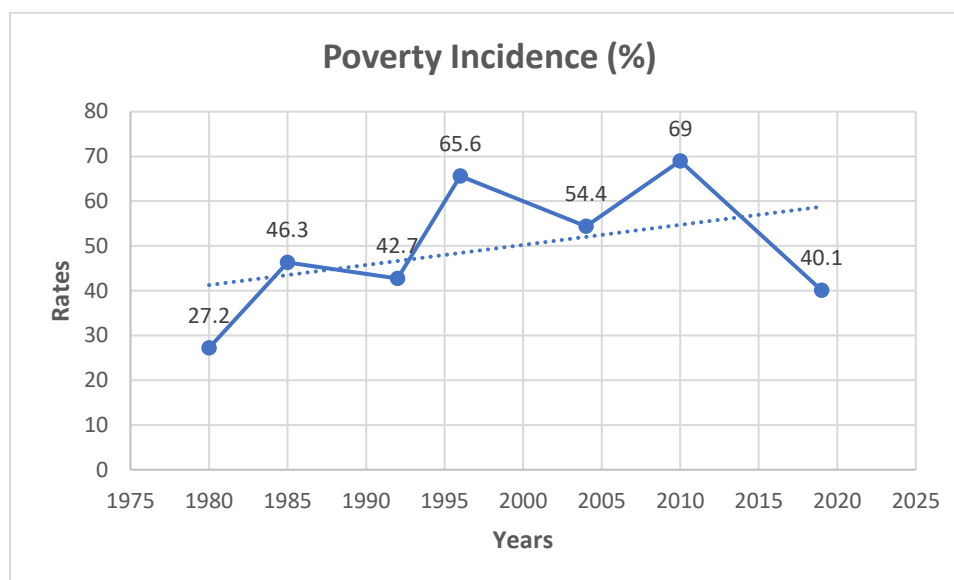


Figure 3: Poverty Incidence, 1980–2019.

This growth in number of the poor means that, conversely, the number of non-poor in Nigerian has been on the decrease only to rise relatively in 2019. In Table 3, the number of non-poor is shown to have fallen from 72.8% in 1980 to 53.7% in 1985. By 1996, the non-poor were less than half of the population at 34.4%. The number rose slightly to 43.3% in 2004 but fall again to 31.0% in 2010 and rose again to 59.9% in 2019.

Table 3:

Poverty headcount: Non-Poor, Moderate Poor and the Extremely Poor (%), 1980-2019

Year	Non-poor	Moderately poor	Extremely poor
1980	72.8	21.0	6.2
1985	53.7	34.2	12.1
1992	57.3	28.9	13.9
1996	34.4	36.3	29.3
2004	43.3	32.4	22.0
2010	31.0	30.3	38.7
2019	59.9	N/A	N/A

Source: NBS (2012 & 2020).

With incomes precarious and food prices rising, food insecurity is higher than before, the poverty crisis has gone worse to the point that the possibility of an adult member of a household have gone a whole day without eating in the past 30 days rose from 6.4% in 2019 to 18.3%,

2020. The current crisis could, therefore, have long-term consequences on future generations in Nigeria (World Bank, 2021).

An analysis of the proportion of the population living below the national income poverty line showed that 53.5% of the Nigerian population live on less than \$1.9/day (United Nations Development Programme, UNDP, Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative, OPHI, 2022). This is also reflected in the high cost of living occasioned by the high rates of inflation, which has further reduced the purchasing power of poor and vulnerable households in Nigeria.

Considered from the multidimensional poverty index (MPI),<sup>3</sup> the portion of multidimensionally poor people in Nigeria rose from 54%, with the average intensity of deprivation of 42%, in 2018 to 63% with the average intensity of deprivation of 41% in 2022 (NBS, 2022). Table 4 reveals that, while the national number of people with multidimensional poverty are approximately 133 million, the rural area has great share of this accounting for approximately 106 million people, leaving the urban area with only 27 million people. By the MPI of 0.302 for rural areas, it shows that people in the rural areas of Nigeria are more deprived in terms of the MPI dimensions of health, education and living standards.

**Table 4:**  
*Multidimensional poverty by area*

Area	MPI	Incidence (H, %)	Intensity (A, %)	Population share (%)	Number of poor people (million)
<b>National</b>	0.257	62.9	40.9	100.0	132.92
<b>Rural</b>	0.302	72.0	41.9	69.6	105.98
<b>Urban</b>	0.155	42.0	36.9	30.4	26.94

*Source:* NBS (2022)

These poverty rates cover both old and young, clearly follows from the youth unemployment figures earlier discussed that the youth are likely to be more in poverty. This is from the simple fact that, with no jobs (i.e., means of income), they have no or low incomes, which means low or no ability to meet basic needs, hence, deprived.

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<sup>3</sup> The Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) is a measure of poverty that creates a more comprehensive picture of poverty. It reveals who is poor and how they are poor by focusing on a range of different disadvantages that poor people experience.

Identifiable factors for this wave of poverty in recent time include, but not limited to, climate-related shocks (such as floods and droughts), proliferated conflicts (which has displaced people, disrupted markets, and interrupted livelihoods), Covid-19 which has ravaged the economy, and the rising inflation. The continuing happening of these have pose fresh threats to poverty reduction. Added to these are other distortionary policies like the existence of multiple exchange rates and trade policy of bans on certain goods and the 2019 border closure. These, according to World Bank (2022) have the potency of further weakening Nigeria's prospects for inclusive growth and poverty reduction.

### **3.3 Security Situation in Nigeria**

Nigeria, like any other nation, has as its fundamental constitutional duty the protection of lives and property and ensuring the well-being of the citizens. This, as contained in the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, as amended, holds that: 'the National Assembly may make laws for the federation or any part thereof with respect to the maintenance and securing of public order and providing, maintaining and securing of such supplies and services as may be designated by the National Assembly as essential supplies and services.' It emphasized this stating that, 'the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government' (The 1999 Constitution). Other objectives in line with this are clearly stated in various sections of the Nigerian constitution. These are supported by the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16, which seeks to "promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies" within and between nations.

The increase in the breakdown of security in Nigeria calls for serious concerns. There is an escalating wave of insurgency, banditry, kidnapping, civil agitations, political and communal clashes, etc. going in Nigeria and making it to increasingly become uninhabitable. The country is ranked 75th out of 141 countries surveyed on the 2022 global safety perception index amid worsening insecurity (Institute for Economics & Peace, 2022). Similarly, the 16th edition of the 2022 Global Peace Index placed Nigeria on the 143<sup>rd</sup> position among 163 independent nations and territories, haven scored 2.725 (Institute for Economics & Peace, 2022). The Terrorism Index for the country has decreased to 8.23 in 2021 from 8.42 in 2020, however, still high (Institute for Economics & Peace, 2022). Other similar indices have highlighted the precarious security situation of the country, which have not only affected economic activities but increased threat to life and property.

The growing dimension of these security challenges are worrisome. There has been continuous attacks of terrorist groups of Boko Haram and an Islamic State, affiliated splinter faction, the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), killing tens of thousands, displacing millions, and causing a protracted humanitarian crisis in the northeastern part of Nigeria. Conflict between pastoralists and farmers in Nigeria's northwest has recently erupted amid a broader deterioration in security conditions involving cattle rustling, kidnapping, ethnic massacres, and emerging Islamist extremist activity. Farmer-herder conflict has also increased in the central Middle Belt, where resource access disputes intersect with ethno-religious divisions between Christian and Muslim communities. Criminality and militancy in the oil-rich Niger Delta have hampered development and contributed to insecurity in the south. Husted & Blanchard (2020).

Insecurity in Nigeria has left thousands of people dead, displaced, lack access to food, health facilities, shelter and clean water, with children more affected. Table 5 presents a brief picture of the estimates showing the consequences of these insecurities in Nigeria between 2009 to 2021.

**Table 5:**  
*Insecurity in Nigeria at a glance*

Form of Insecurity	Region most Affected	Major Perpetrators	No. of Deaths <sup>a</sup>	No. Displaced <sup>b</sup>
Boko Haram/ ISWAP	North-east	Insurgents	37,600	3.2 million
Farmer-herder	North-central	Pastoralists	16, 550	450,000
Militancy in Niger Delta	South-south	Individuals	1030	N/A
IPOB	South-east	Separatist group	1,870	N/A
Banditry/Kidnapping	All	Individuals	N/A <sup>c</sup>	N/A
Border conflicts	All	Communities	680	N/A

<sup>a,b</sup> Estimates as at 2021.

<sup>c</sup> Armed bandits operating in different parts of the country are estimated to have killed more Nigerians than the Boko Haram terrorist, group and other violent criminal gangs in Nigeria.

*Source:* Author's compilation from various credible sources (2022)

From Table 5, insecurity, caused by Boko Haram/ ISWAP, farmer-herder, militancy in Niger Delta, the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), banditry/kidnapping, and border conflicts, has

claimed my lives and displaced many from their homes. This picture of insecurity in Nigeria at a glance is not as horrifying as the actual one, taking in details the exact statistics of actual deaths, persons adopted, people with permanent injuries/in bad health, property destroyed, displaced persons, people thrown in starvation and psychological traumas, etc. The immediate and direct impact is thus, really felt by the actual victims. Even the indirect multiplier effect that affects the generality of the country is painful with lasting long-run consequences.

#### **4.0 Links between Youth Unemployment, Poverty and National Security Challenges**

Whereas life in a secured nation is congenial for existence and institutional operations, an unsecured one is associated with ills of conflicts/disputes, killings, banditry, human and drug trafficking, kidnapping, etc. as noticed in Nigeria. In such a situation, the common and visible signs of security challenges are conflict, upheavals, hardships, general breakdown of law and order, loss of life and property, poverty, and loss of trust in the government. Life tends to be nasty, brutish, and short as Hobbs contends, and with palpable state of anomie. This is the synonymous to the present-day Nigeria.

There have been many attempts to create the link between youth unemployment, poverty and these national security challenges in Nigeria. And as has been conceptually linked above, the relationship between these variables is not only complex but reinforcing. As noted by Okafor (cited in Ajaegbu, 2012), unemployment appears to be a major cause of violence in Nigeria. Unemployed youth are far more likely to be perpetrators than victims of crime and violence. The consequences of the widening gap between rich and poor are the conflicts and violence witnessed in the country, which are on the rise. Individuals thrown into a dilemma due to lack of a job become vulnerable and susceptible to anything, good or bad, that can earn a living. This is reinforced by poverty and other associative factors like dirty politics, corruption, bad governance, population growth, etc. (Ajaegbu, 2012).

Youth unemployment, thus has negatively impact a nation's economic growth and development and other development indices of a nation. The youth are the most active group even in terms of consumption; as such, they constitute a great portion of the demand in an economy. Therefore, their being unemployed means no income for them which affects their demand and then the economy suffers. According to Mercy Corps (2020), if left unchecked, youth unemployment can have serious social repercussions because unemployed youth tend to feel left out, leading to social exclusion, anxiety and a lack of hope for the future. This can lead

social vices like rape, prostitution, armed robbery, kidnapping, drug abuse, thuggery, etc. Youth unemployment also makes the fight against poverty hard to win (Mercy Corps, 2020).

Obona and Nweke (2018) As a survival mechanism, the unemployed and unskilled youth in Ebonyi State resort to all sorts of criminal activities ranging from armed robbery, kidnapping, burglary, murder, rape, violent and conflict in the state there by making the Ebonyi state.

According to the Oxford Research Group (2012), the mixture of lack of education and attendant lack of opportunities to a high male youth population has made the northern part of Nigeria actually a breeding ground for terrorism. The Group also noted that, increasing poverty in Nigeria is accompanied by increasing unemployment. The World Bank (2022), equally asserted that lack of job opportunities is at the core of the high poverty levels, regional inequality, and social and political unrest. The Bank stated further that, inequality, in terms of income and opportunities, remains high and has adversely affected poverty reduction.

The bleak employment climate therefore, partly accounts for the general insecurity in the Nigeria resulting to terrorism, rape, burglary, murder, banditry, violent crimes, cyber-crime, kidnapping, and other unpatriotic conducts. While the youth population in Nigeria is expected to grow further, with approximately increase of 60% between 2015-2030, the rate of youth unemployment is likely to keep rising correspondingly if much is not done to create jobs to match up with this population boom.

In terms of the impact of reverse impact of insecurity on youth unemployment, insecurity can halt business operations during periods of violence and also result in the outright closure of many enterprises, particularly in areas or zones where insecurity is prevalent. It equally makes and environment unappealing to businesses and discourages intending investors to make business investments. This is because it raises the cost of doing business, either directly through the loss of goods and properties or indirectly through the cost of taking precautions against business risks and uncertainty. These expenses may have a negative impact on the development and progress of the business. These situations, when happened, create unemployment by loss of jobs – existing or potential.

The state of insecurity in the country has equally been sustained by a regressing economy, lack of basic needs of life, and a growing sense of disenchantment with the fact that government and its representatives have not been fair to the people, thus pushing some citizens into criminal activities including violent crimes to make a living and to take out their anger on a passive



society. Consequently, the state of increased lawlessness, violence, and criminality, which has become characteristic of life in Nigeria, has further increased the dismalness of insecurity challenges facing the country. The diminishing standard of living and the deteriorating social infrastructure like roads, the educational system, hospitals, energy, etc. have all contributed to the desperateness of the people in the nation.

On the other hand, insecurity curbs economic growth and often leads to heightened levels of poverty. Thus, sustained conflicts are both caused by and contribute to poverty. However, according to the findings of NBS (2017), wealth does not necessarily protect households from exposure to conflict and violence. Examining the effect of conflict on food security of the people, NBS (2017) found that 79% of households in the north east, 71% of households in north central, and 74% of households are food insecure. This shows how insecurity has further led to poverty. Also tracing the reverse multiplier effect of insecurity on poverty (especially in the North-east, Nigeria), the UNDP (2020) predicted that, for each direct death, an additional nine people (most of them children) will have been killed due to lack of food and resources. Beyond the direct and indirect death tolls, various aspects of progress and development (namely GDP, poverty, malnutrition, infant mortality, education, water availability and sanitation) may not return to pre-conflict levels even by 2030.

## **5.0 Way forward**

All hopes are not lost in fixing the socioeconomic ills of Nigeria. All that is required is the right policies and the right actors with the right political-will to oversee the implementation of the policies. As such, given the right political actors with the right will, the following measures can work right if pursued.

In tackling youth unemployment, the following strategies, as may have been advanced in many quarters, are still potent.

- 1. Reviving/Building of industries.** Lack of industries to employ the human and other resources that Nigeria is endowed with is clearly one of the reasons for the high rate of youth unemployment. With the existence of industries, thousands of young people will be employed, and they will have the opportunity to lead useful independent lives. It behooves on the government and other well-meaning stakeholders to do everything possible to encourage the development of industries in order to absorb the millions of unemployed youths who are not only unproductive but also destroying the country by engaging in illegal activities.

In addition to the above, creating an attractive business environment that will draw foreign investors should be encouraged. Foreign investors will serve a great deal in complementing the efforts of domestic investors. They will not only create employment through their business investments, but also generate revenue for the government, which can be used in other areas of development. This, if achieved, will significantly reduce unemployment and its consequences for the country's development.

**2. Training youths to be entrepreneurs/employable.** Despite the fact that industries are scarce, most Nigerian youths are unemployed because they lack employable skills and there is high dependency on government jobs. The youth can be trained to have vocational skills in areas such as carpentry, welding, plumbing, and brick laying which are in high demand. By teaching them these skills, they will be able to establish their own outfits or get employed and fend for themselves and even assist relatives and younger members of their families. Support from the government and other stakeholders in sponsoring a number of youths in various skill areas that will increase the demand them at completion of such trainings will be a step in good direction.

**3. Make agriculture attractive.** If the agricultural sector will be revived and made attractive, it will provide many jobs for the teeming youths. The agricultural sector has the capacity to employ thousands of Nigerians, increase food security, generate revenue, increase industrial productivity, and increase interindustry linkages through value-chain. And Nigeria has the airable lands and the man power to make this sector work. All that is required is the political will and the sector will perform the wonders it once did.

**4. Development of infrastructure.** Much depends of infrastructure as the catalyst for economic productivity. With proper development of the critical sectors like energy and transport to provide basic infrastructure of electricity and road, there will be a rise in production and consumption that will call for more employment of labour and other resources. The ripple effect of infrastructural development is almost immediate with little or no time lags. As such, once achieved, employment generation will be automatic.

**5. Elimination Corruption.** Corruption is, and has remained, one of the major adversaries in this country, which has fought against every development effort. However, various “attempts” by different administrations to tackle corruption have not seriously brought any good results. Once this hydra-headed evil is subdued, most sectors will pick-up and unemployment will reduce. Eliminating corruption will, for instance, do away with the issue of ghost workers in government establishments, draining the nation's resources while also discouraging qualified

employees from applying for those positions. These must be investigated and prosecuted in order to prevent future occurrences.

In terms of poverty reduction, the key areas of provision of food, shelter, health, income, education, and security, once well targeted and achieved, can lead to reduction or possible reduction of poverty. As such:

**1.** Prioritizing and accelerating the implementation of existing national policies and action plans that have an impact on poverty reduction in terms of food production will be a step in the right direction. Increased investment in agriculture will lead to increased food production, and better food security that take millions of people out of poverty. This has proved effective in like China among other countries.

**2.** Provision of homes for the poor. Extension of government housing schemes to cover the poor will be another good measure of reducing poverty. Rural housing project should be embarked on to provide moderate accommodations for the poor particularly in the rural areas.

**3.** Ensure basic health care. The provision and monitoring of basic health care in terms of disease prevention by provision of good/adequate water, sanitation, health education, and affordable/effective health care centres is another component of the therapy for poverty reduction. This makes the individuals healthy and productive as it takes away man-hour lost to ill-health or possible lost to death of the bread-winner.

**4.** Provision of income outlets. Job creation schemes and empowerment initiatives, particularly for young people, that are geared towards poverty alleviation should continuously and seriously be pursued by the government and other opportune stakeholders. Efforts at eradicating inequalities and just distribution of income should be sustained. Studies have shown that a 10% increase in a country's average income reduces poverty by as much as 20-30%.

**5.** Provision of education. Provision of quality education is also a veritable way of fighting poverty. This prepares the individuals for healthy living, income earning, and enhance longevity. The UNESCO has pointed out that, basic reading skills can lift 171 million people out of extreme poverty.

**6.** Enhance security. While the goal of ending all forms of insecurities may seem a lofty one, it means a lot for poverty reduction. This is due to the close link between the two. In a secured environment, people engage in economic activities, earn income, improve their living

standards, and poverty falls. Also, in such environment, budgets set aside to fight conflicts is used to provide public services that enhance people's lives. It also reduces the risks that the most vulnerable communities face and ensures that equality and inclusion goals can be met.

## 5.0 Conclusion

As paramount as security is for harmonious co-existence, economic prosperity, and national unity needed for global competitiveness, Nigeria's security is seriously challenged by key factors of rising youth unemployment and poverty. These two factors seem to be the main causes of insecurity in Nigeria. Worrisome of these causative factors is that the relationship between them and insecurity is complex and reinforcing – made up of constellation of forces acting in a constant fashion as keep themselves reoccurring. As youth unemployment and poverty increase, national security breaks down and this further heightens youth unemployment and poverty, and it goes on in perpetuity if not checked. Breaking this vicious link thus requires appropriate measures that will trigger pro-poor economic growth, create jobs, foster equality, boost food production, improve living standard, and create national unity. Adherence to some of the measures suggested above can perform the magic.

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