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CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF YOUTH IDLING ON URBAN STREETS IN KENYA

Balongo C. V., Okuto, E., & Wamuyu, T. W.

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Balongo C. V.,^{1*} Okuto, E.,² & Wamuyu, T. W.³

^{*1} Master Candidate, St. Paul's University [SPU], Kenya

^{2,3} Ph.D, Lecturer, St. Paul's University [SPU], Kenya

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to look into the causes and effects of massive youth idleness in Kenyan urban streets. The rate at which idle graduates roamed the streets after higher education or so constituted social malice to the whole country. This paper relied basically on secondary data sources and adopted descriptive approach and analysis of researches of other scholars in empirical data gathering. From the findings it was revealed that idleness among youths in Kenya was caused by five major challenges and five major effects created tension and hatred between the haves and have not in society, thus leading to communal clashes and the rise of communal associated gang groups such as mungiki, chinkororo, bagidad boys, musumbiji and Al shaabab. More so these militant groups were characterized by; armed robbery, public mugging, extortion, prostitution and child trafficking. All these constituted hiccups to security of lives and properties. Furthermore, the findings revealed that idleness among Kenyan youth increased from 17.1% in 2015 to 20.1% in 2017 with youth unemployment rates at over 55% a group that constitutes 67% of the population. More significantly, this study tried to urge the government through its recommendation to create labour market that would work better for the youths absorption hence reducing idleness. There was need for heavy investment in education that catered for modern issues to enable the youth becomes self-reliance instead of job seekers through skills development and training.

Keywords: Causes, Effects, Youth Idleness

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INTRODUCTION

Naturally, it is expectation of our society's both at individual and government levels we should join hands to build a one society called Kenya where everyone is resourceful and useful especial after going through education system and achieving academic qualification at every stage. This guarantees the society that large army of academically qualified youths will not engage in activities that would undermine the stability of democracy in Kenya.

The challenges of chronic youth idleness in our urban streets are very evident in Kenya. Every academic year tens of thousands of graduates from all over Kenyan universities and more turns out for whom there are no jobs. Most urban streets in Kenya are littered with youth hawkers, peddlers and bike riders in the name of "boderboder" who ordinarily due to their academic qualification would have found gained employment in some enterprises. Alternatively, given an enabling environment they would have demonstrated their skills and resourcefulness for reliable management structures (UN, 2015).

Unfortunately, the youths have shifted their achievements, skills, attention and techniques to criminal activities including crimes in technology commonly called cybercrimes. This is the wrong use of technological innovation, invention and creativity which ordinarily should have been channeled towards technological advancement as witnessed in developed countries that are the largest world producer and economic power (Danjuma, (2012).

The huge number of youths who are idle is capable of undermining democratic practice as they constitute a serious threat if engaged by the political class for clandestine activities as evidenced in Middle East and North African countries (MENA) (World Bank, 2015).

Idleness among a certain group of people more especial the youth group makes them vulnerable and deprived a people without jobs. Idleness can be defined differently but according to the International

Labor Organization (ILO) these are economically active group of population who are without work but available for and seeking work this group includes those who have lost their jobs and those who have voluntarily left work (World Bank, 2013).

Idleness could also be said a situation where members of labour force wish and are willing to work but cannot access the jobs. The governments by all means and at all level should strive to create viable structure which will encourage the youths to think rationally towards job creation rather than job pilferage and almost unending lack of jobs, loss of jobs and their being no hope for day-day massive graduating youths in Kenya (Ibrahim, 2011).

Therefore, youth idleness can be described as the conglomeration of a group of people with diverse background, who are willing and capable to work, yet cannot access any opportunity neither find the type of job they trained to do, or the job they will be proud to do as their area of expertise (Onyeiwu, 2015).

According to the economic principle of demand and supply when the labour supply outstrips the demand for labour, it creates joblessness and unemployment hence, idle economically productive members. These insufficient job opportunities in the formal sector forces academically qualified youths to engage in unorthodox livelihood sources, casual works thus leading to underemployment (Onah, 2011).

The perception of good governance has to do with the general performance of the leaders witnessed by higher number of the people from the locality, county and at national levels. The judgment can be achieved by whether their socio-economic and political policies have affected their lives more positively or negatively. Good governance should provide structures whereby the segment of the youth and especially those who have thrived in education in society is gainfully through employment either in the public or private sector of the economy through direct entrepreneurial activities (Kariuki, 2016).

Good governance also suggests a system by which electoral processes give room for credibility so as those who must be accountable to the people and whom the people can collectively say no to any of his or her unfavorable social and economic and political policies at all times (Obama, 2015).

Idleness is as a result of unemployment or lacking what to do while you will to do; the unemployment rates in developing countries are increasing on daily basis due to increasing demography. The accurate rates of unemployment in developing countries including Kenya are hard to establish (Khanna, 2014).

Unemployment being a precursor of idleness can be categorized into two; first, the older unemployed who might have lost their jobs through bankruptcy and redundancy and secondly, the younger group who have never been employed (ILO, 2011). According to Kenya Demographic Household Survey (KDHS, 2015) and Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS, 2014) Kenya has a youth population of 26 million representing 62% of the total population of the country. From the population 10 million of the youth have got no job thus idle; 2.6 million are under-employed and 1.4 million have hidden jobs (KDHS, 2015; KNBS, 2014).

The data on youth unemployment in Kenya showed that 43% of unemployment rates are among urban youth aged between 22-28 years and 19% of the rates are among the age 18-21 years two-thirds of urban unemployed range from 18-28 years old. Those with post-secondary education and unemployed tended to be young males with some dependents. There are however, relatively few secondary school graduates and the lowered job expectations of primary-school graduates (WB, 2016).

This indicates that in Kenya, the trend of unemployment rates cannot be relied on because sometimes any increase in one or two years is subsequently followed by a decline in the years ahead. By and large, idleness among the youth in

Kenya urban streets remains as a fact resulting from progressive growing rates of unemployment among the Kenyan society and the contemporary world. Unless there are some radical measures undertaken, by the society at large to overcome this growth by the deliberate actions and reactions of genuine leaders, this menace could be a time bomb in our time; a case of MENA as mentioned above.

METHODOLOGY

The study depended on secondary data as sources of information. Literature was derived from previous researches and analysis other academicians and scholars, internet, books, articles, journals, newspapers and government documents.

FINDINGS

Idleness as a Concept of Economy

Both active and inactive population shapes the characteristics of any economy. The population which is willing and able to work is the active one that is involved actively in production of goods and services in any enterprise.

The meaning of idleness from the International Labor Organization (ILO, 2016) is the economically active group of population who are without work but available for and seeking work this group includes those who have lost their jobs and those who have voluntarily left work (World Bank, 2013). Idleness is by large contributed by lack of jobs, a macro-economic challenge that all governments that care for their citizens should regulate and closely monitor if there is any overflow (Fofack, 2014).

Frictional Unemployment is a type unemployment caused by industrial friction where jobs may exist but workers may not be able to fill the positions because they either don't have necessary skills, or they are not aware of the job existence. The unemployable remains without jobs on account of shortage of raw materials, or mechanical breakdown of plants. It can be concluded that the idleness on the streets can zero

down when the economy is doing well hence, lowering this type of unemployment (KIPPRA, 2009).

On the other hand, residual Unemployment results from personal factors like advanced age, inadequate training, disability of any kind and poor attitude towards work. Changes in techniques of production are constantly increasing due to increased mechanization leading to technological unemployment this leads to displacement of labour hence huge number of unemployed citizens who becomes idle roaming the streets (Okafor, 2011).

Causes of Idleness among the Youth in Kenya

From the study of unemployment in Kenya by KIPPRA (2009) it is clear that idleness among the youth is brought about by the high rates of youth unemployment. The study indicates that by 2006 the unemployment rates of the youth aged 15-24 years was rated 24% of which urban areas was 19.9% the major cause of high rates in urban areas is identified to be rural urban migration which is usually explained in terms of push-pull as a factors.

This factor results from pressure emanating from rural areas where there is serious existence of underemployment emerging from underdeveloped facilities like infrastructure that makes rural life less attractive. Hence, youths migrate to urban areas hoping to secure substantive employment from industries in urban areas. Another factor attracting many lives in urban areas is the existence of social amenities in urban areas, meaning that the allocations of these facilities in rural areas have been neglected and concentrated in urban areas (Hall, 2017).

From the background and demographic context, by 2015 the African youthful population was estimated to be over 226 million people aged between 15-24 years (UN, 2015). In 2017 the estimated youth population in Kenya was 61 per cent of its population ages between 15-24 years averaging at 10 million this

statistics echoes the demographic realities within and without the borders (UN, 2017) see figure below).

Kenya saw its population grow rapidly in the second half of 20th century and a decline in child mortality rates. This brought about the fastest population growth rates with fertility rates approximating at 3.9 births per woman from 1990's this trend continues more significantly with many young people starting their own families (Muiya, 2014). When a country's population composed of youth is over 20 per cent, it becomes 'youth bulge' from UN definition. This is both positive and negative for the society. Positive because of present and future generation and negative since it poses risks for social economic development (UN, 2013).

The continuing significant increase of the Kenyan population more so the youth from past decades provided the country it's socio-economic and political structures with a number of opportunities, increased number of workers henceforth consumers but also increased stress. This led to a number of issues like;

rural-urban migration by young people moving to cities in order to escape rural poverty thus congesting urban areas and increasing discontent leading to poor employment (ILO, 2013). Others factors includes; urbanization which tend to grow in uncontrolled way, increased population leading to environmental degradation, insufficient infrastructure due to increased need of education, healthcare and sanitation. All these contribute to high levels of unemployment among the youth which highly contributes towards their idling in urban streets and difficult moment in socio-economic inequality since the youth represent a bulk of unemployed people (Odero, 2017).

Therefore, idling among the youth is rampant throughout Kenyan urban areas, this is brought about to a large extend by high rates of unemployment which particularly affects ages between 18-to-25-year. Much of youth unemployed rates is higher in

urban areas ranging from 35-60 per cent compared to 20-25 per cent in rural areas. Interestingly, young women are more affected by economic difficulties than young men, the difference being 10 per cent more. These results from the fact that female youth in urban areas are higher compared to the male at about 50-65 per cent (Keya, 2016).

Long Term Effects of Youth Idling on Urban Streets in Kenya

Idle youth can do anything that comes their way. Barash and Webel (2014) argue that the society has been created on two different social classes, the haves and have-nots who are the majority. This kind of inequality in income brought about by huge number of unemployed youth, increases levels of poverty leading to increase in violent crimes in society.

A report by the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS, 2013) indicates that 65 per cent of Kenyan wealth is owned by 22 per cent of the whole population indicating that there is concentration of wealth in the hands of a few when many are struggling with poverty. Wamuyu (2012) asserts that most of the crisis in society results from failure of governance to address its socio-economic issues faced by its citizens.

The UNCTAD (2015) report on world investment, the Kenyan economy experienced a decline in foreign direct investment from USD 6.34 billion in 2013 to USD 5.12 billion in 2014 this was as result of increased criminal activities of Al Shaabab, Pirates and other criminal groups like Mombasa Republican Council (MRC) at the Coastal region which is the entrance to the mainland Kenya. These criminal activities like kidnapping affected heavily the tourism sector, being one of the employers and contributor to the national income between the year 2012 and 2014 the sector suffered a big blow by loss of 68 per cent of its activities. The low growth rate is highly attributed to widespread corruption and some political obstacles.

According to Nyamalo, (2011) the Kenyan people were divided along ethnic lines due to high unemployment levels among different tribes. These led to decline in quality of life which is a precursor family income, low levels accessing healthcare, education and good shelter. The continued poverty reduces access to nutritious food, leading to reduction in life span.

It is therefore very significant to note that the idling youth on streets in urban areas points to the fact that it is a very critical phenomenon with far reaching implications for the stability of any country in terms of good governance, democracy and socio-economic power. The figures used in this paper may not have captured in totality all cases of idling youth however, the government and other development actors including private sector must consider these issues as security threat. This is because security is a situation when citizens are at liberty, peaceful, can participate in governance, enjoys human rights protection and access freely basic needs including national resources what Adams Smith calls the 'wealth of a nation' (Morphy R. (2008).

Solutions to Idling Youth in Kenya

Regarding the youth vulnerabilities it becomes necessary to come up with a design that is geared towards supporting research that would enhance analysis of current data that will help in identifying key aspects of potential interventions of youth issues. Those involved in youth employment issues in Kenya have a big role in focusing on their future through revising the curriculum at all levels of learning institution to allow for acquisition of technical and skilled workforce for readily employable labour that can compete with the current needs of the development agendas. There is need to support the youth to become sole proprietorship both in informal and formal employment opportunities through training in leadership, management, entrepreneurship skills, financial management, and conflict management. Also organizing seminars and

workshops through which empowerment programmes like capacity building, supporting creativity and innovation, helping in identifying areas of need are holistically enhanced.

It is important to create enabling and a friendly socio-economic and political environment which encourages investors who will help in creating jobs to absorb those seeking employment. Provision of infrastructure, industrial climate, support research institutions and improving in electric connection. Another solution will be to invest massively in information technology that will equip the youth with useful skills in automobile, agribusiness production and processing, integrated science clinic, computer and information technology etc. if the government can implement the United Nations Credit Unit Programs that has the potentials to create over 38,000 jobs in the agricultural sector in one year, 50,000 both skilled and unskilled jobs in the real estate project, 1000 pharmacists and marketers in pharmaceutical projects (Oyinde, 2008).

In addition to this if credit unit can partner with Kenyan universities through sponsorship of seminars and conferences for the training youths as credit professionals, training in new approaches of conflict prevention and resolutions on peace advocacy by the United Nations will compliment and strengthen the efforts of the government in reducing high rates of idling youth.

CONCLUSION

The findings of the study revealed that the rate of idling youth in urban streets in Kenya increased from 19.1 per cent in 2014 to 22.3 per cent in 2015 with those roaming around seeking for jobs at over 43 per cent. By the year 2013 to 2015 the increase was 14.7 per cent idle youth without jobs on the streets. These

indicators show that youth idling is at a high rate thus a menace that can jeopardize the democracy of Kenyan government if manipulated otherwise.

From these findings it was concluded that the government at all levels, the international community and other development actors and stakeholders must embark on massive job creation this may not be a quick fix but as a matter of urgency to take these youths away from the streets.

Lastly, democracy must be embraced at all times this encourages inclusivity of all despite their ethnic orientation, age and race. A situation whereby only a few privileged people in government positions benefits at expense of impoverished majority portrays real danger in society if not addressed with urgency. Leadership have a role in promoting good governance, empower the youth for all mutual benefits.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Investment heavily in education that caters for modern development issues through skills development and training, to enable the youth to become self-reliance instead of job seekers.
- The appointing authority must by all means avoid making appointment that is politically based but to appoint decent people to head and strengthen the existing institutions.
- Anti-corruption crusade should improve its effort in attacking the root cause of corruption and address it to minimize corruption.
- Create labour market that work better for youth, Promote conducive atmosphere for investment by improving infrastructural building that will provide employment to many youth people such as good roads, electricity.

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