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Unemployment, Causes, and its Psychological and Social impact in Rivers State

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ABSTRACT

Unemployment in Rivers State has become a serious concern as residents (indigenes and non-indigenes) who are well qualified and certified still struggle to survive. The aim of this study was to investigate unemployment, causes and its psychological and social impact in Rivers State with specific objectives such as: to investigate the causes of unemployment in Rivers State, to ascertain the psychological and social impact of unemployment in Rivers State and to find out the consequences of long term unemployment in Rivers State. Disproportionate stratified random sampling technique was used to select 300 respondents for the study. The instrument for data collection was a well structured questionnaire which was administered to the 300 respondents with the help of three (3) well trained assistants. Only 290 questionnaires were properly filled and returned giving a return rate of 96.7%. Results from the study revealed that most of the residents who have been psychologically and socially impacted by unemployment in Rivers State were between 30-50 years who had at least first degree and had been unemployed for at least 7-9 years. Results also revealed that the main causes of unemployment were economic recession 64 (22.1%), political crisis 56 (19.3%) tribalism/ethnicity 52 (18%) and God Fatherism 50 (17.2%). Furthermore, the major psycho-social impact of unemployment on residents were anxiety 216 (74.5%), increased stress 228 (78.6%), low self-esteem 190 (65.5%), poverty 280 (96.6%), social unrest 272 (93.8%), financial hardship 264 (91%) and income inequality 270 (93.1%). Results also showed that the consequences of long term unemployment experienced were majorly health issues 260 (89.7%), stigmatization 251 (86.6%), domestic violence/abuse 227 (78.3%) among others. More so, all the respondents and most of the respondents 290 (100%) indicated that unemployment benefits, mass employment into government establishments 290 (100%) and job training programmes 200(69%) would reduce unemployment in the State. Recommendations were made that the Federal/State Governments should employ/recruit often to reduce unemployment in the state; individuals who haven't found jobs yet should learn a skill or do business for self reliance and that unemployed persons should have good social interactions, have a positive mindset towards getting a job.

Keywords: psychological, social impact, unemployed persons

INTRODUCTION

Unemployment in Rivers State has become a serious concern to the indegenes and non indegenes residing in the state due to the fact that in recent times, recruitment exercises and those employed by the state government into its Institutions have had the exercises cancelled and employment terminated after working for a while with little or without any form of remuneration, which has left some of those affected with Psychological and social impact including high blood pressure, suicide attempt or even death as a

result of shame, depression, low self-esteem, frustration and inability to take care of their daily needs and that of their dependants. A study conducted in April, 2020 by Achdut and Refaeli revealed that unemployment was independently associated with greater psychological distress.

Unemployment is a situation where people who are capable and empowered to work have no work to do in exchange for remuneration. It is also a state of lack of meaningful and fruitful engagement that can result in financial gains or reward for an individual. It is a state of having no work to do, worklessness/joblessness. According to the United Nations Population Fund [UNFPA] (2022) in Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (2022), the Population of Nigeria in 2022 was 216.7million. Other sources estimated that the Nigerian Population was 225.95 million in 2021 (Encyclopedia Britannica n.d or 225.08 million in 2022 (United States [US], 2022). National Bureau of Statistics [NBS] Nigeria labour Force Survey [NLFS] for Q4 2020 revealed that the working age population of Rivers State was 5,351,856 and 3,940,441 people were in the labour force (NBS, 2021). The same survey indicates that the total unemployed rate was 41.59 percent, while the underemployment rate was 17.63 percent. Sasu (2024) reported that as of 2023, the state of Abia, registered the highest unemployment rate in Nigeria, at nearly 19% (18.7%) followed by FCT and Rivers with rates reaching 13 percent (13.4%) and 14% (14.1%) respectively. However there was a more recent data which showed a decrease in unemployment rate in Rivers State in 2023 which indicated a significant drop in the unemployment rate to 14% (NBS, 2023). Ahmed (2018) strongly argued that the peace, tranquility and survival of a nation is tied to the way the government implements programme of action to bring down the level of unemployment and in the process, reduce the number of willing youth and adult who are the basic tools used in insurgent activities. Chukwudi and Ugbomah (2022) posited that Nigeria does not have any business with unemployment and or poverty due to the abundant natural and material resources placed at its disposal by providence and the government has a critical and pivotal role to play in reducing to the barest minimum, the effects of unemployment and poverty among its citizens. Kulik (2000), Lee-flang et al (1992) and Mc-Fadyen (1995) in Yang et al (2024) stated that unemployment drastically curtails access to critical resources, societal respect, stability and financial means-intensifying the mental strain experienced by the jobless. Research elucidates that the stigmatization of unemployment significantly impairs mental well-being.

Rivers State indigenes were majorly farmers and fishermen but since the discovery of oil and infiltration of oil companies in the various communities blessed with oil, people especially graduates now look for "white collar jobs" and as the population is increasingly growing, the available jobs are no longer enough for graduates. More so, the few jobs available are given to a certain people who are associated with the ruling/political class. Job recruitment in Rivers State has been highly politically motivated. The unemployment situation has birthed various criminal activities.

Nigeria info 92.3 PH reported in 2020, that the latest data from the National Bureau of Statistics puts Rivers State as the third State with the most unemployed persons in Q2 with 43.7% unemployment rate. Consequently, unemployment in Rivers State has given those residing in it especially the indigenes, great concern as every recruitment process gives opportunity to the political class to bring in their loyalists and those who are related to them while the masses who are well qualified for the positions do not get the jobs.

Statement of the Problem

Unemployment in Nigeria is a national issue and Rivers State which has the third highest percentage rate of unemployment as published by the National Bureau of Statistics, is not left out. In an ideal situation, when people learn a skill from a registered organisation or complete tertiary education, they are turned over or recruited into various Government Ministries, Departments, Parastatals, Organization and Agencies where their skills and knowledge are required. The COVID-19 outbreak in 2020 in Nigeria worsened unemployment coupled with the subsidy removal by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu in 2023 which gave rise to economic hardship, loss of jobs, retrenchments and cut down/reduction of salaries as life became tough for many families and a lot of bread winners lost their means of livelihood, businesses that couldn't stand the heat of the recession were shutdown, families that couldn't survive in the city had to go back to their villages, high taxes were initiated and the economy became even more harder which

affected persons in all states of the federation. Sadly, there are many graduates and skilled persons that are willing to work and contribute meaningfully to society if the government and private firms gives them the opportunity to work but instead have toured the path of crime as a temporary/alternative means of survival which later becomes permanent if they find it lucrative. Kidnapping, banditry, armed robbery, ritual killings including prostitution which are linked to unemployment have become a serious threat to national security. More so, the health implications of unemployment which are anxiety, depression, high blood pressure, social stigmatization, loss of self worth, suicide attempt or even death are of public health concern, hence the need for the study as it impacts negatively on health, and unemployment in Rivers State should be addressed immediately.

Aim and Objectives

The study aimed at investigating Unemployment, causes, and its Psychological and Social impact in Rivers State. Specifically, the objectives were:

1. To investigate the causes of unemployment in Rivers State.
2. To ascertain the Psychological impact of unemployment in Rivers State.
3. To ascertain the Social impact of unemployment in Rivers State.
4. To find out the consequences of long term unemployment in Rivers State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1 .What are the causes of unemployment in Rivers State?
2. What are the Psychological impacts of unemployment in Rivers State?
3. What are the Social impacts of unemployment in Rivers State?
4. What are the consequences of long term unemployment in Rivers State?

METHODOLOGY

The cross sectional descriptive survey design was used for the study. Three specific objectives and three research questions guided the study. The dis-proportionate stratified random sampling procedure was used to select three hundred (300) unemployed persons in the study area. Rivers State was divided into the three geopolitical zones: Rivers East, Rivers West and Rivers South East Senatorial Districts. A total of 300 well structured and validated questionnaires were distributed across the three geopolitical zones aided by three research assistants. One hundred (100) unemployed persons from each of the zones were given the questionnaires to fill and return the same day. A total of 290 questionnaires were properly filled and returned giving a return rate of 96.7%. The questionnaires had section A which contained demographic characteristics of respondents, section B which contained questions on causes of unemployment, section C which contained questions on the Psychological and Social impact of unemployment, section D which contained questions on Respondents' perception of consequences of long term unemployment and section E which included respondents' opinion on solutions to unemployment in Rivers State. The research questions were answered using percentages, tables and charts.

Concept of Unemployment/ Unemployed

Madan (2015) submitted that unemployment is the absence of opportunities of jobs for people willing to and actively looking for a job. Omolo (2010) corroborated that unemployment is the enforced involuntary separation from remunerative work on the part of the normal working force during normal time, at normal wages and under normal conditions. Ejo-Orusa (2020) affirmed that unemployment is an economic condition where an individual or individuals seeking jobs cannot manage to get themselves economically employed. Temitope (2021) posited that in a lay man's definition, unemployment is a situation that happens when people who are willing and able to work are unable to get a job. The unemployment rate can be calculated by dividing the total unemployed people by the total number of people in the workforce. According to Chukwudi and Ugbomah (2022), an unemployed is described as anyone who is able to work, but doesn't have an occupation. International Labour Organization [ILO] (2011) in Chukwudi and Ugbomah (2022) defined the unemployed as numbers of economically active population who are without work but available for and seeking work, including people who have lost their jobs and those who have

voluntarily left. National Bureau of Statistics [NBS] (2017) ascribed unemployed persons to individuals of working age, who are willing and actively looking for job but are unable to secure any.

Therefore, Unemployment is when individuals/persons who are qualified, skilled and knowledgeable in their field of study or line of work, and are capable/willing to work have no jobs as a means of economic gains. So, it can be said that the unemployed are persons of working age who are skilled, knowledgeable or have the mental capacity in their field, and searching for work to do but do not have jobs.

Causes of Unemployment

Temitope (2021) argued that the major causes of unemployment in Nigeria have been identified by economic analysts, researchers and scholars within and beyond the country. Among the major causes are neglect of the agricultural sector, high rate of migration from rural to urban areas, disregard for vocational training Institutes , high rate of embezzlement, high level of corruption, political favoritism and nepotism, low rate of investments, rapid growth in population, use of archaic and outdated school curriculum, low economic growth, weak manufacturing sector with no hope of development in years to come, drive for modernization in the manufacturing industries i.e. the manufacturing companies are now developing new technology for production and has led to many workers losing their jobs due to their replacements by machines.

More so, the study of courses or enrolling in programmes that have low societal demands/needs in the university and are no longer relevant to society could bring unemployment to those who enrolled in such outdated courses/programmes, so the tertiary Institutions have a duty to keep updating their curriculums, bring in new programmes that are 21st century compliant to the graduate students that meet societal standards in terms of knowledge and skills. In addition, poverty is also a cause of unemployment. Some lucrative 'white collar jobs' are sold for money, slots are given to individuals in companies/ Institutions to monetize for job offers and those who are not able to afford the 'said sum' are left out of the recruitment exercise even if they are the most qualified, so this leaves them with no other choice than to keep searching and hoping for jobs that they'll get by merit. It can be said that unemployment is caused by a lot of factors which can be tackled by any determined government as the consequences of it endanger human lives.

Psychological impact of Unemployment

Psychological health as opined by Paul and Moser (2009) refers to a person's mental and emotional well being, behaviour, ability to cope in society, and capacity to satisfy the demands and day to day life, and the relationship between unemployment and psychological health is notably strong.

Mental health

Platt and Hawton (2000) in Nworgu and Amadi (2024) asserted that some individuals think of suicide whenever they encounter distressing conditions. One of such situations can be prevalent experience of unemployment making individuals to find it distressing enough to give into suicide. Platt and Hawton (2020) in Worgu and Amadi (2024) further argued that unemployment has a link with either parasuicide (self-injurious behaviour) or suicide.

Unemployment has been associated with mental health issues like low self esteem, feeling of suicide and eventually death for individuals of working age who can't seem to handle the situation even cardiovascular diseases, heart failure and increased stress. Mental health issues significantly contribute to disability across varying socio-economic landscapes, spanning from developing nations to developed ones (Lavikainen et al, 2000; Wang et al 2007 in Yang et al, 2024). Strully (2009) argued that unemployment has a declining impact on physical health of individuals; for example, a group previously employed lost their jobs due to closure of the company, 83% of them reported poor health conditions like hypertension, arthritis or diabetes. Sullivan and Wachter (2009) also asserted that it is possible for mortality rate to be increased among involuntary displaced or laced off individuals. They further asserted that for associated mortality rate consequences or effects from job loss are inseparable from physical health problems as it takes little longer for it to show up.

Emotional health

Prolonged unemployment can cause stress, anxiety and depression. Job loss which also brings about unemployment can also lead to feeling of shame, humiliation, stigmatization, loss of one's identity and value. According to World Health Organization [WHO] (2017) depression casts its shadow over ~264million individuals worldwide, while psychoses and schizophrenia affects a projected 20 million people. Brady (2010) opined that unemployment arising from layoffs, redundancy and expiration of work contract are perceived to be harmful to the wellbeing and psychological health of those affected.

Social Impact of unemployment

Lack of employment makes crime a more attractive option for some Nigerian University graduates, this is because it is common to find graduates still roaming the streets five years after graduating in search of jobs thereby lending force to crimes such as armed robbery, car snatching, pipeline vandalization, oil bunkering and prostitution among the youths (Emeh, 2012 in Promise, 2020). Kilishi et al (2013) conducted a study on the impact of unemployment on various types of crime in Nigeria including armed robbery. The study collected data from the 36 States including the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) from 1996-2005 and found that unemployment had a significant impact on armed robbery. If the issue of unemployment is not tackled by the federal and state governments, the whole country, states and local government may go for ransom or pay for ransom to rescue themselves from the hands of kidnappers. Ngwama (2014) in Ejo-Orusa (2020) stated that so far, the list of victims has grown so tall and it becomes less difficult to predict the future from here. In an interview, after the release of a victim of kidnapping, the victim identified his kidnappers as 'young graduates who did not have employment and were looking for how to survive'.

The lasting impact created by unemployment often leaves a toll on society. A reasonable and responsible administration will open up more industries, create job opportunities for its graduates, empower its citizens with skills in their field of interest, support young entrepreneurs and small scale businesses and not leave the unemployment figures to keep increasing till the recruitment opportunities can no longer accommodate the rising figures.

Consequences of Long term unemployment

Huge Indebtedness

Long term unemployment may lead to financial indebtedness and instability which might lead to high blood pressure, hypertension, heart failure or death. It can also lead to a state of hopelessness.

Strained family/ friends relationships

Long term unemployment may leads to financial difficulty which impacts greatly on family relationship, it can cause conflict in the home between man and wife or the supposed breadwinner and members of the family; it can lead to tension in the home which can negatively impact mental health. Unemployment has the capacity to cut ties among friends and family. It makes it difficult for unemployed persons to access financial help, support or loan from friends, family and financial institutions, since they wouldn't have a concrete pay back plan and source of livelihood is not visible at the moment.

Isolation/marginalization

The stigma faced for not working and taking care of immediate needs can lead to isolation and marginalization from friends, family and society at large.

Crime and Insecurity

Long term high unemployment rate can lead to social issues, social insecurity and heightened crime rate. Ome-Ogeonu and Samuel (2014) asserted that in recent times the scourge of unemployment has resulted to youth restiveness- anti-social violent activities that are been perpetrated by aggrieved youths. It involves brutality, communal clashes, kidnapping, criminality, prostitution and other crimes perpetrated by idle minds. Prior to this time, people viewed youth restiveness as persistent demand or struggle for the liberation of the oil rich region which has suffered long periods of total neglect by past and present administration in the area of granting them their due percentage of the derivation fund, ecological fund and provision of infrastructural developments. The idle aggrieved youths have taken to crime pointing

accusing fingers to unemployment caused by the high level of injustices in the Niger Delta and corrupt politicians. Ejo-Orusa (2020) submitted that since 2005 to date, violent related crimes among the unemployed youths have increased, such that the national security is under threat. These include armed robbery, kidnap for ransom, cybercrime, political thuggery, vandalizing of oil pipes, oil bunkering among others in Rivers State.

According to Ome-Egeonu and Samuel (2014), in recent times scourge of unemployment has resulted to youth restiveness- anti social violent activities that are been perpetrated by aggrieved youths; it involved brutality, communal clashes, kidnapping, criminality, prostitution and other crimes perpetrated by idle minds. Prior to this time, people viewed youth restiveness as a persistent demand or struggle for the liberation of the oil rich region which has suffered long periods of total neglect by past and present administrations in the area of granting them their due percentage of the derivation fund, ecological fund and provision of infrastructural developments. The idle aggrieved youths have taken to crime pointing accusing fingers to unemployment caused by the high level of injustices in the Niger Delta and corrupt politicians

Coping strategies for unemployed individuals

1. Seek therapy: mental health professionals can be of help to guiding one in coping with the mental/emotional challenges of unemployment.
2. Develop a strong network of support: build a strong network of support from friends, family and neighbors to reduce the feeling of worthlessness and isolation.
3. Live a healthy and happy life: one can engage in exercises, eat healthy meals, learn to relax, meditate and learn to be happy by doing the things that makes one happy.
4. Stay positive/believe in yourself: individuals who are job searching should be positive that the job they seek for, will come at the right time. They should not be coerced into believing that it is impossible for the job to come.
5. Learning a skill/hand work: The time of waiting in job searching can be put into learning a skill or hand work that can fetch a source of livelihood while waiting for the job to come.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

SECTION A

Table 1: Socio- demographic characteristics or respondents (n=290)

Variable	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Age in years		
18-27	52	18.3
28-37	89	30.7
38-47	98	33.8
48yrs &above	50	17.2
Total	**290**	**100**
Marital status		
Single	78	26.9
Married	149	51.4
Divorced	33	11.4
Widowed	30	10.3
Total	**290**	**100**
Gender		
Male	108	37.3
Female	182	62.7
Total	**290**	**100**
Educational status		
FSLC	28	9.6
SSCE/NECO/GCE	50	17.2

ND/ NCE	42	14.5
HND/BSC/BA	102	35.2
PGD/MSC/PHD	60	20.7
No formal education	8	2.8
Total	**290**	**100**
State of Origin		
Rivers State	213	73.4
Other States	77	26.6
Total	**290**	**100**

Table 1 showed that majority of the respondents 98 (33.8%) were aged 38-47, 89 (30.7%) were aged 28-37, 53 (18.3%) were aged 18-27 and those aged 48years and above were 50 (17.2%). The females were majority 182 (62.7%) followed by the males 108 (37.3%). Majority of the respondents 149(51.4%) were married, followed by the singles 78(26.9%), the divorced 33 (11.4%) and the widowed 30 (10.3%). Most of the respondents 102 (35.2%) had HND/BSc/BA, followed by PGD/MSc/PhD 60(20.7%), SSCE/NECO/GCE 50 (17.2%), ND/NCE 42(14.5%), FSLC 28(9.6%) and those who had no formal education 8 (2.8%). Majority of the respondents 213 (73.4%) were Rivers State indigenes while 77 (26.6%) were those who had come from other states.

SECTION B

Table 11: Perceived causes of unemployment in Rivers State (n=290)

Variable	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Unavailable jobs	21	7.2
Tribalism/ethnicity	52	18.0
Economic recession	64	22.1
God Fatherism	40	17.2
Political crisis	56	19.3
Automation/technological advancement	24	8.3
Government policies	23	7.9
Total	**290**	**100**

Table II showed that most of the respondents 64 (22.1%) attributed the unemployment situation to economic recession, followed by political crisis 56 (19.3%), Tribalism/ Ethnicity 52 (18%), God Fatherism 50 (17.2%), Automation/Technological advancement 24 (8.3%), Government policies 23 (7.9%), and the least was unavailable jobs 21 (7.2%).

Table III: Respondents' years of unemployment in Rivers State (n=290)

Variable (Years)	Frequency	Percentages (%)
1-3	38	13.1
4 - 6	68	23.4
7 - 9	120	41.4
10 - 12	44	15.2
13 - 15	20	6.9
Total	**290**	**100**

Results on Table 111 showed that majority of the respondents 120 (41.4%) had not been employed for 7-9 years, followed by 4-6 years 68 (23.4%), followed by 10-12 years 44 (15.2%), followed by 1-3 years 38 (13.1%) and 13-15 years 20 (6.9%).

SECTION C

Table 1V: Psychological impact of unemployment on Respondents

Variable	Frequency				Total	(%)
	Yes	(%)	No	(%)	290	100
Anxiety	216	74.5	74	25.5	290	100
Social isolation	182	62.8	118	40.7	290	100
Loss of identity & self-worth	186	64.1	104	35.9	290	100
Increased stress	228	78.6	62	21.4	290	100
Depression	187	64.5	103	35.5	290	100
Low self-esteem	190	65.5	100	34.5	290	100
Hopelessness	175	60.3	115	69.7	290	100
Irritability and danger	169	58.3	121	41.7	290	100
stigma	157	54.1	133	45.9	290	100

Table 1V showed that majority of the respondents had experienced increased stress 228 (78.6%), anxiety 216 (74.5%), low self-esteem 190 (65.5%), depression 187 (64.5%), loss of identity/self worth 186 (64.1%), social isolation 182 (62.8%), hopelessness 175 (60.3%), irritability and anger 169 (58.3%) and stigma 157 (54.1%).

Table V: Social impact of unemployment on Respondents

Variable	Frequency				Total	(%)
	Yes	(%)	No	(%)	290	100
Social Unrest	272	93.8	18	6.2	290	100
Poverty	280	96.6	10	3.4	290	100
Increased Crime Rates	252	86.9	38	13.1	290	100
Financial Hardship	264	91.0	26	9.0	290	100
Strained Family Relationship	248	85.5	42	14.5	290	100
Income Inequality	270	93.1	20	6.9	290	100

Table V showed that most of the respondents had experienced poverty 280 (96.6%), social unrest 272 (93.8%), income inequality 270 (93.1%), financial hardship 248 (85.5%).

SECTION D

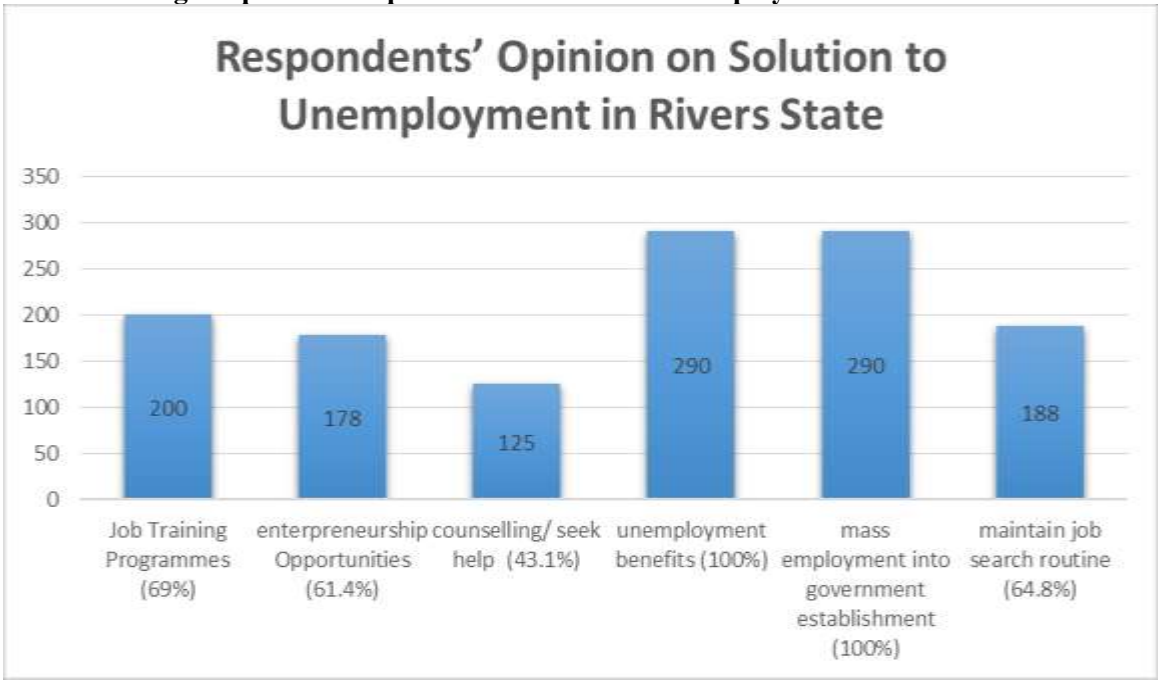
TABLE V1: Respondents perception on consequences of long-term unemployment

Variable	Frequency				Total	(%)
	Yes	(%)	No	(%)	290	100
Stigmatization	251	86.6	39	13.4	290	100
Low self-esteem	216	74.5	74	25.5	290	100
Exclusion from family matters	220	75.9	70	24.11	290	100
Suicide attempts/ death	153	52.8	137	47.2	290	100
Health issues	260	89.7	30	10.3	290	100
Domestic violence/ abuse	227	78.3	63	21.7	290	100
Divorce/ separation	209	72.1	81	27.9	290	100

Table V1 showed that majority of the respondents 260 (89.7%) perceived health issues, 251 (86.6%) stigmatization, 227(78.3%) domestic violence/abuse, 220(75.9%) exclusion from family matters, 209(72.1%) divorce/separation and 153(52.8%) perceived suicide attempt/death as long term effect of unemployment.

SECTION E

Chart showing Respondents' opinion on solutions to unemployment in Rivers State



The chart in section E showed that majority of the respondents 290 (100%) opined unemployment benefits, 290 (100%) mass employment into government establishments, 200 (69%) job training programmes, 188 (64.8%) maintaining job search routine and 178 (61.4%) entrepreneurship opportunities which would reduce/minimise unemployment in the State.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that there is unemployment in Rivers State which has impacted on residents psychologically and socially especially those aged 30-50years, who at least have graduated from higher institutions of learning. It is also concluded that economic recession, tribalism/ethnicity and political crisis are the major causes of unemployment in Rivers State. Furthermore, major Psychological and social impact of unemployment on residents include anxiety, increased stress, depression, low self-esteem, social isolation, poverty, social unrest, increased crime rate, poverty, financial hardship and strained family relationship. It is also concluded that stigmatization, health issues, domestic violence/abuse, divorce/separation and exclusion from family matters are the long term consequences of unemployment in Rivers State. Moreso, mass employment into government establishments, payment of unemployment benefits, job training programmes and entrepreneurship opportunities were opined as major solutions to unemployment in Rivers State.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. The Federal Government/ Rivers State Government should recruit graduates and those with needed skills in its work force yearly to reduce the unemployment in the state.
2. More Individuals in Rivers State should establish businesses and employ residents often to reduce the burden on the Government.
3. Individuals who haven't gotten jobs after graduation should learn a skill, trade or do business to take care of their needs while waiting for a job.
4. Individuals still in search of jobs should socialize freely, have a positive mindset and be hopeful for the jobs to come.

5. Families/friends of Individuals in search of jobs should give them their maximum support, show them love, concern and understanding so they don't go into depression or try to commit suicide.

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