

YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT: IMPLICATIONS FOR GROWTH IN  
LOCAL BAPTIST CHURCHES IN MODERN NIGERIA

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## ABSTRACT

Growth in a local church is not just about number. It is also about quality. It involves health, conducive atmosphere, responsible membership arising from deep personal commitment to Jesus Christ and the cause of His church. It is, therefore, a function of collective participation by individuals who are internally motivated to contribute to the works of their church. This motivation is often dampened by social problems of which unemployment is one.

This work examined the problem of youth unemployment and its implications for the overall growth of local Baptist churches in the Nigeria of today. The objectives were to create awareness about the state of unemployment in the Nigerian society; to show how the problem affects the growth of local Baptist churches and; to suggest ways of curbing the effects of the social problem. To achieve these, library research method was employed. Books focusing on different aspects of the topic were consulted and reviewed. Journal articles that are related to the subject matter were also reviewed as well as materials from Internet sources. Some unpublished materials from the Seminary library were also consulted.

The study showed that despite efforts by national and international government agencies, Nigeria still has one of the highest rates of unemployment in the world. The study also identified that the problem affects unemployed individuals socially, physically, psychologically, morally and spiritually. Besides, it has negative effects

on major growth areas of a local church such as worship and fellowship, ministry, evangelism, finance and discipleship. Furthermore, the study showed that unless local Baptist churches in Nigeria devise specific action plans to help their unemployed members, growth in quantity and quality may not be achieved. Therefore, the work suggested ways by which Baptist churches, their pastors, other rich and influential members of the churches, as well as the unemployed persons themselves can work towards confronting the problem of unemployment and, thereby, enhancing growth in their churches.

church vis-à-vis its worship and fellowship, ministry, evangelism, finance, and nurturing of members. These functions are crucial to the growth of any local church. Therefore, the study showed that unemployment has negative implications for the growth of local churches.

5.3 In order to tackle this problem and, recognizing the limitations of government's efforts, the study highlighted some church-based (or faith-based) measures toward alleviating the sufferings of the unemployed persons in the church. The measures included the need for Christians and churches to understand the biblical basis for work as the will of God for man created in God's image; a means of providing for individual's consumption needs and of just participation in the works of the community. In this vein, the research showed that it is imperative for major stakeholders in local Baptist churches in Nigeria to rise to the challenge of playing active roles toward relieving their brothers and sisters in Christ of the debilitating effects of unemployment and thereby helping their churches to experience true health and growth.

## 5.2 Conclusion

This research work has been able to highlight the negative effects of unemployment on the social, psychological and spiritual lives of the unemployed persons. It also highlighted the negative effects of unemployment on major growth areas of a local church such as worship and fellowship, ministry, evangelism, finance and discipleship. The work also showed that unless each local Baptist



church in today's Nigeria devises specific action plans to help its unemployed members, it may not experience quantitative and qualitative growth. To maintain growth in the face of global rising trend of unemployment, this work has suggested ways by which local Baptist churches can reduce unemployment among their members.

### 5.3 Recommendations and unemployed members

Based on the findings of this research work, the following recommendations are made for Baptist churches that wish to tackle unemployment among their members so as to enhance their spiritual as well as numerical growth.

#### A. Recommendations for Pastors

- i. Baptist pastors should design specific ways of demonstrating that they care for unemployed youths in their congregations. Ministering to the unemployed can be done through public and private prayers, counseling and motivation.
- ii. Pastors should initiate "Job Seeking Committee" in their churches.
- iii. Pastors should use their offices to connect job seekers in their churches with influential and rich individuals either within the church or outside of it.
- iv. Pastors should initiate programmes such as vocational trainings, workshops, and seminars on economic empowerment, special prayer programmes for divine favour and breakthrough for unemployed members and so on.

## B. Recommendations for Churches

- i. Local Baptist churches should embark on productive business ventures with a view to creating job opportunities for their members as well as extending ministry services to the public.
- ii. Baptist churches should establish welfare ministries to attend to the needs of the poor and unemployed members.
- iii. Baptist churches should establish Revolving Loan Schemes with a view to empowering unemployed members toward starting or expanding small-scale, productive businesses. A special committee of administrators should be set up to manage the scheme with the capital base being increased from time to time.
- iv. Church members who have gainful employments should give cheerfully in Tithes, offerings, and special donations so as to enable their churches minister more adequately to the needy among them.
- v. Baptist members who are influential in the society should use their influences to secure jobs for unemployed Baptist members.

## C. Recommendations for Unemployed Christians

- i. Unemployed Christians should look within and around themselves for opportunities toward self-employment. Such opportunities could be in learning new trades, craft or vocation; developing untapped talents or potentials; pursuing further studies, skills development or capacity building towards qualifying for existing job offers and so on.
- ii. Unemployed members should consider coming together as a team to initiate a venture.

iii. Unemployed Baptist members should maintain their commitments to God and their churches by taking active parts in worship, ministry activities, evangelism and discipleship programmes of their churches. Christians who are steadfast in their faith during trying moments can expect God's intervention in their affairs.

If these recommendations are carefully implemented, it is obvious that the number of church members who have deep fellowship with Christ and have responsible membership in our churches would increase tremendously. That is, church growth, in quality and quantity, would result.