Unemployment, Gender Disparity and the Constraints of Individual Entrepreneural Dispositions: The Percerption of Selected University Students in Delta State, Nigeria

Jike Philomina Florence , Ejechi Eucharia Onyema , Ikenyi Ngozi Sandra
Department of SociologyDelta State University, Abraka
Corresponding Author: jikephilomina@gmail.com

Abstract
IThe study examined the challenge of Gender disparity in unemployment and the constraints of individual entrepreneurial dispositions against the backdrop of patriarchy and trenchant population growth. The literature around the subject matter was reviewed. Two specific objectives were highlighted (i) Determine the level of education/ specialist qualifications and unemployment in Delta State (ii) Determine the influence of Gender disparity (male/ female)in unemployment in Delta State and two cognate hypotheses were derived from the objectives. The theory adopted for this study is the Marxian theory of unemployment. Cross sectional research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised 27,668 from where the sample size of 394 was derived using Taro Yamane formula. Questionnaire instrument was used to collect data from a convenient sample of 394 respondents across the three universities of interest in Delta State. Pearson product moment correction statistic was used to test the hypotheses. The study revealed that general unemployment is lower in areas with specialized training but higher in areas without specialized training. The study showed that gender disparity is significant in the ratio of men and women that are unemployment in Delta State. This calls for public policies to address gender disparity as well as programmes for specialized entrepreneurial trainings for the unemployed in Delta State.

Keywords: Unemployment, Entrepreneurship, Gender disparity, Specialised Skills and population growth

Introduction

Rapid Population growth and unemployment are global challenges which remain unresolved. Nigerian Population continuously increased at 3% per annum with birth rate of 40 per 1,000 and also death rate of 15per 1,000 (Gideon, 2016). It was also estimated that an educated Nigerian woman gives birth to a lesser number of 3 children compared to an average Nigeria woman who gives birth to 6 children (Evans, 2011). Delta is presently experiencing 40.36% rate of unemployment which has significantly contributed to a higher level of poverty, whose effects and consequences have contributed to an increasing rate of insecurity (Egunjobi, 2021). Unemployment is both an economic and social issue affecting almost all states and all persons directly or indirectly. It causes social anxiety, and is manifested in the wave of crimes, youth unrest and unstable socioeconomic structures across nations. The world, particularly developing nations like Nigeria are facing serious job challenges and widespread decent work deficits (Adesina, 2013). One of the major challenges of developing countries is extreme poverty, majority of such people live in the rural areas because many of them are unemployed, subsistence farmers and many others in small scale businesses. Rural empowerment seeks to increase the productivity of the rural people and reduce poverty and mass hunger among rural dwellers. Similarly, rural empowerment is imparting special skills and training on people who live in these rural areas to empower them toward living life that is commensurate with the prevailing international standard of living and enable them to contribute to socio-economic development. The current modernization and technological advancement of

today's world is highly attributable to centuries of rapid population growth and economic expansion. A growing population meant more workers and laborers who would increase overall output with more productive labor, the economy is inevitably expanded and the society reaps the financial benefits (Tartiyus, Dauda & Peter, 2015).

Unemployment is one of the fundamental developmental dispute facing Delta at the Moment. Unemployment was high in the 1980s, but the available reports from various local and international bodies, and the glaring evidence of joblessness in this decade are clear indications that there was no time in Nigeria's history where unemployment is as serious as now. One cannot really conclude that the government at one level or the other have not done anything at one time or the other, to reduce unemployment in Nigeria. For instance, the creation of the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) and its skills acquisition programs, FSP, NAPEP, PAP, just to mention a few, are some of the various intervention mechanisms aimed at ensuring economic growth that is rich with job creation opportunities. Besides, the Federal Government over the years has been claiming strong real GDP growth rate measuring at 6% or 6.5% since 2005 till date (Aganga, 2010; Ogunmade, 2013). There is apparent paradox. A situation whereby, there is a decade of strong real GDP of 6.5% economic growth, and in the same period, unemployment rate continue to rise annually from 11.9% in 2005 to 19.7% in 2009, and over 37% in 2013% (Aganga, 2010; Ogunmade, 2013).

Statement of the Problem

Delta is one of the states in Nigeria where unemployment has remained a major problem with a current of 40.36%. This problem has escalated and the situation cannot be addressed by mere campaign or words of mouth (Nwankwo & Ifejiofor, 2014). It requires the combined efforts of both individuals and the government of the country in particular and the world at large to formulate lasting strategies to curb this menace. Unemployment in Nigeria has affected the youths and the economic development of the country from a broad spectrum of socio-economic perspective. It is obvious that the situation especially that of youth unemployment affected Nigeria's progress in several ways. Apart from the economic waste it brought to the nation, it is also a time bomb of political unrest for the country (Ipaye, 1998). According to Ezie(2012), the unemployment situation in Nigeria is disturbing and even more disheartening that the country's economic condition cannot absorb an optimal proportion of its labor force.

Rapid population growth is significantly associated with unemployment because job opportunities are fewer than the number seeking for them, and stagnating economic performance because a large proportion of available resources is consumed instead of cumulatively contributing to economic growth. In addition rapid population creates continuous pressure on resource (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004b). Rural urban migration is one of the problem we are currently facing in Delta state and it is usually explained in terms of push-pull factors. The push factor includes the pressure resulting from man land ratio in the rural areas and the existence of serious underemployment arising from the seasonal cycle of the lack of infrastructural facilities, which makes the rural life unattractive. Youths move to urban areas with the probability of securing lucrative employment in the industries. In addition to this, there is the concentration of social amenities in the urban centers. This means that the rural areas are neglected in the allocation of social and economic opportunities (Adebayo, 1999). Most people tend to migrate from areas with a high rate of unemployment to those with employment opportunities. This movement poses a danger of stagnation to such an entity while posing a risk of population explosion for the purpose of this research. Unemployment has also led to a collateral increase in the crime rate in Delta state.

Objectives of the Study

The objective of the study is to examine the problem of unemployment,

The specific objectives are to

1. Determine the level of education / specialist qualifications and unemployment in Delta State
2. Determine the influence of Gender disparity

(male/ female) in unemployment in Delta State

Research hypotheses

The following research hypotheses is derived from the above objectives

1. There is no significant positive relationship between the levels of education/ specialist training and unemployment in Delta State
2. There is no significant positive relationship between Gender disparity (male/ female) and unemployment in Delta State

Literature Review

Meaning and Nature of Unemployment

An unemployed person is someone of working age (15years and above), jobless, able and available to work, and actively looking for a job . This means anyone without a job who is reaching out to contacts about jobs or applying for available jobs. This definition of unemployment is specific and rigid; it doesn't just include "anyone who doesn't have a job. Both unemployed and employed people make up the labor force, or the subset of the population that is both able and interested in working. Not included in the labor force are citizens not looking for jobs, for example, a stay-at-home mom, a college student, or a discouraged worker, someone who has stopped looking for work because they believe no work is available. Several studies have demonstrated that youth unemployment is a major challenge in economies like Nigeria characterized by a young, growing population e.g the Zamfara journal of polities and development is one of the studies that has demonstrated the youth unemployment.

Chappelow (2020) argues that Unemployment occurs when a person who is actively searching for employment is unable to find work. Adding that unemployment is often used as a measure of the health of the economy. Supporting the thought, Mlatsheni and Leibbrandt (2011) point out the extraordinary prevalence of unemployment and wordlessness as perhaps the single most important contributor to the persistence of social exclusion on a large and momentous scale. A jobless individual who is available for work but fails to make the effort to seek work for various reasons cannot be classified as unemployed. In addition, an employed person who decides to seek (additional) work can only be termed as moonlighting (Baah-Boateng, et al, 2013).

The influence of Gender Disparity (male/female) and Unemployment

Despite improvements in education and skills, gender disparities in labor market opportunities and outcomes remain widespread in the developing world. In Delta state labor force participation rates among women remain indeed well below those for men 19.8% and, when women do participate, they often face a higher likelihood of being employed in precarious jobs or of being openly unemployed. The labor market participation rate for women remains very low; at just under 23 percent currently, it is less than half the world average of about 49 percent. It is also 51 percent lower than the participation rate for men. Working women in that part of the world are more likely than men to be in vulnerable forms of employment; they are over-represented among contributing family workers, who often perform a disproportionate amount of unpaid care and household work (Charmes (2015), International Labor Organization (2016a), Rubiano and Viollaz (2018). The gender gap in formal sector jobs is also large; in 2017, the shares of men and women in wage and salaried employment were 62.8 percent for men and 54 percent for women (International Labor Organization (2017). In addition, women in the labor force are twice as likely as men to be unemployed, with an average female unemployment rate of about 20 percent compared to 9.5 percent for men–a gap of 10.5 percentage points. At the same time, gender disparities in employment and unemployment only partially reflects the extent of the labor market challenges that women face, these disparities also relate to remuneration, across all levels of occupation and sectors. The gender gap in hourly wages remains large, despite the introduction of equal pay laws International Labor Organization (2016b).

The Levels of Education and Specialist Qualifications and Unemployment

Higher education has been seen as a potent instrument for human capital development and empowering citizens. One of the motives of establishing higher institutions are to turn out high level manpower that is knowledgeable, skilled, self-reliant and relevant to the needs of the labor market. Corroborating this assertion, Idogbo (2011); Aselebe, Popoola and Oladiran (2016) stressed that tertiary education is to developing human being mentally, morally worthy in character and learning to enable them perform leadership roles in the society they find themselves. The individual course of study and qualification also determine the chance to secure a job, people are more likely to study a reliable course at the university level in other to get a job easily after school. Omoniwa and Adedapo (2017) see employability as an individual's capacity and willingness to become and remain attractive in the labor market.

Theoretical framework

The theory best suited and adopted for this study is the Marxian theory of unemployment (1867). Karl Marx analyzed the workings of the capitalist system, Marx's economic theories were under ceaseless attack by economists who defended capitalism the theories made headway in working class circles, particularly in the prolonged depression of the 1930's. One of the reasons for the universal interest in Marx in those years was his treatment of unemployment, for he showed how unemployment arises and why it is necessary to capitalism. John Maynard Keynes (1936) *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* brought about a twofold shift in the attitude of many economists and politicians.

On the one hand they now accepted that unemployment—sometimes of acute and politically dangerous proportions—can arise out of the normal functioning of the capitalist system, but on the other hand they hailed Keynes as the man who they thought had shown them how full employment could be achieved if the right measures were taken by governments. Keynes' theories were welcomed most of all by the trade unions and the Labor Party because they seemed to offer the prospect that a future Labor government need not be overwhelmed by an "economic blizzard", as had happened to the Labor government which entered office in 1929 and collapsed under the weight of two million unemployed in 1931. According to Karl Marx, unemployment is inherent within the unstable capitalist system and periodic crises of mass unemployment are to be expected. The function of the proletariat within the capitalist system is to provide a "reserve army of labor" that creates downward pressure on wages.

Strength and weaknesses of the theory

Marxian theory creates a system of true equality. Although Marxism's system of government is considered as communism, it places an emphasis on human rights, with its foundation encompassing equal gender roles, health care and access to education. As Marx believed, there should be equality before the law and societal services, where everyone has an equal stance and opportunity with no dominant gender. This means that every person would be able to get access to the most important things he needs regardless of whatever he does, wherever he lives or how much he makes to provide a better living for those depending on him. If you look at the Marxist theory, it considers society as a whole, which means that it acknowledges all the social forces involved, including the power interests of different groups. Stressing the role of class struggle or conflict within society between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, it is effective in explaining change in society. In essence, it organizes society under capitalism, where the bourgeoisie tends to maximize profit with the proletariat. One of the weakness of the theory is that it does not value the concept of private ownership.

While you are given a place to live as part of a community and contribute to the common good, you will have no private property ownership, which means that you might not have much control over your residence and your contributions.

Methodology

This study focused on understanding the issues of unemployment especially the perception of collateral variables by students of selected universities across Delta State. it specifically examined the perception of undergraduate students from Delta State University, Abraka, the University of Delta, Agbor and southern Delta University, Ozoro. The thematic scholarly ring revolved around educational qualification individual entrepreneurship tendencies and gender disparity within the context of unemployment in Delta State. The cross sectional research design was chosen for this study. This design allows the use of statistical analysis to determine meaningful correlation between the variables of interest. Respondents were chosen from a population of three universities across Delta State, viz, Delta State University, Abraka, University of Delta, Agbor and Southern Delta University, Ozoro. The estimated population of students in these three Universities is 27,668 (official estimate from the institute of Education, Delta State University, Abraka, 2021).

Table 1. Selected universities in Delta State

University	Senatorial District	Population
Delta state university Abraka	Delta Central	22,000
University of Delta Agbor	Delta North	3218
Delta State University of Science and Technology, Ozoro	Delta South	2450
Total		27668

Source: Institute of Education Delta state University 2021

Sample Size and Sample Technigues

394 respondents participated in this research exercise. The sample Size was estimated using the Taro Yamane sample size formula, data for this study was gathered using both Quantitative and Qualitative methods. The entire scope of the study was covered by the questionnaire in order to avoid ambiquity. The first part of the study questionnaire addressed demographic issues while the second part addressed more fundamental challenges of unemployment and collateral variables of gender disparity and individual entrepreneurial dispositions. A five point likert scale was used to sample respondents levels of agreement or disagreement with the study is main objectives.

Table 2 Sample distribution for Each University

University	Senatorial District	Population	Percentage	Sample
Delta State University, Abraka	Delta Central	22000	80	315
University of Delta Agbor	Delta North	3218	12	47
Delta State University of Science and Technology, Ozoro	Delta South	2450	8	32
Total		27668	100	394

Source: Fieldwork

Socio - Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 3: Sex Distribution of the Respondents

	Items	Frequency	Percentage
Sex	Male	154	40.0
	Females	223	60.0
	Total	377	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2026

Table 4.1 shows the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents that participated in the survey. On sex distribution, majority of the respondents are females with 60.0% and males with 40.0%.

Table 4: Age Distribution of the respondents

	Items	Frequency	Percentage
Age	Below 20 years	123	32.6
	21 to 30 years	212	56.2
	30 to 40 years	42	11.14
	Total	377	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2026

Table 4 shows the age distribution of the respondents that participated in the survey. From the table, it can be seen that 32.6% of the respondents are below the age of 20 years. Also, 56.2% of the respondents were within the age bracket of 21 to 3o years and finally, 11.14% of the respondents stated that they were within the age

bracket of 30 to 40 years.

Table 5: Marital Status Distribution of the respondents

	Items	Frequency	Percentage
Marital Status	Single	263	69.8
	Married	86	22.8
	Divorced	15	4.0
	Widowed	5	1.3
	Separated	8	2.1
	Total	377	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2026

Table 5 shows the marital status distribution of respondents. Data from the table indicates that 69.8& of the respondents are single, 22.8% of the respondents were married, 4.0% of the respondents said they were divorcees, 1.3% attested to being widowed and 2.1% stated that they were separated.

Table 6: Religious Distribution of the respondents

	Items	Frequency	Percentage
Marital Status	Christianity	233	61.8
	Islam	58	15.4
	Traditional African Religion	40	10.6
	Others	46	12.2
	Total	377	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2026

Table 6 shows the religious distribution of respondents. Data from the table indicates that 61.8% of the respondents are Christians, 15.4% of them are Muslims, 10.6% of them are worshippers of African Traditional religion and 12.2% said they belong to other religious groups.

Table 7: Academic Level Distribution of the respondents

	Items	Frequency	Percentage
Academic Level	100	75	19.9
	200	86	22.8
	300	92	24.4
	400	124	32.9
	Total	377	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2026

Table 7 shows the academic level distribution of respondents. Data from the table reveals that 19.9% of the respondents are in 100 level, 22.8% of them are in 200 level, 24.4% of them are in 300 level and 32.9% are in 400 level.

	Items	Frequency	Percentage
Residence	Rural	133	35.3
	Urban	244	64.7
	Total	377	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2026

Table 8: shows the residential area of respondents. Data from the table shows that 35.3% of the respondents live in the rural area and 64.7% of them live in the urban area.

Analysis of Data

Objective 1: Level of education and specialist qualification and unemployment in Delta State

Table 9: Respondents' responses on the level of education and specialist qualification and unemployment in Delta State

S/N	ITEMS	Mean	Standard Deviation	Remark
1	There is now a generalization that graduates with specialist training in computer application, econometric analysis, engineering design, etc are still very much employable in the current job market in Delta State	2.78	.80	+
2	The employment of graduates who have upgraded their skills is still very much ongoing unlike those who have refused to upgrade their skills.	2.63	.81	+
3	Computer skills proficiency/application is one area most university graduate can enhance their employability in the current job market	2.77	.79	+
4	The era of ICT and Internet knowledge dissemination makes it imperative for graduates to learn continuously in order to make themselves relevant in the job market.	2.55	.73	+
5	Many tertiary institutions in Nigeria have realized the need for the upgrade of skills and the diversity of learning process	2.72	.81	+

Source: Fieldwork, 2026, Note + means affirmative response and – means a negative response

Ho_1: There is no significant relationship between the level of education/specialist qualification and unemployment in Delta State

Table 10: Pearson correlation result on the relationship between the level of education/specialist qualification and unemployment in Delta State

		The level of education/specialist qualification	unemployment in Delta State
The level of education/specialist qualification	Pearson Correlation	1	.308**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.014
	N	377	377
unemployment in Delta State	Pearson Correlation	.308**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.014	
	N	377	377

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Objective 2: The influence of gender disparity (male/female) on unemployment in Delta State

Table 11: Respondents' responses on the influence of gender disparity (male/female) on unemployment in Delta State

S/N	ITEMS	Mean	Standard Deviation	Remark
1	Gender consideration is very important in deciding who to employ between a male and female	2.77	.88	+
2	When a male and female have the same qualification and experience, because of connection, the male is more likely to secure a particular job than his female counterpart	2.82	.79	+
3	Most females are given a job on the basis of tokenism, which is the phenomenon which gives the resemblance of equality in principle but not in practice	2.66	.73	+
4	The productive and reproductive roles of women and attendant permission they take from work annually give the impression that women work less than man	2.85	.85	+
5	The salary and the perks of office for men and women of equal qualification seems to favour men than women because men can work very late in the night and travel far away from family unlike women who return home everyday	2.62	.79	+

Source: Fieldwork, 2026, Note + means affirmative response and – means a negative response

Ho_2: There is no significant relationship between gender disparity (male/female) and unemployment in Delta State

Table 12: Pearson Product Moment Correlation for the relationship between gender disparity (male/female) and unemployment in Delta State

		Gender disparity	unemployment in Delta State
Gender disparity	Pearson Correlation	1	.331**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.002
	N	377	377
unemployment in Delta State	Pearson Correlation	.331**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	
	N	377	377

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Discussion of findings

The first hypothesis: There is no significant positive relationship between the levels of education/specialist training and unemployment in Delta state.

The study findings are explained below based on the results of the analysis revealed that there is no significant positive relationship between levels of education and specialist qualifications and unemployment in Delta State. Education and skill level development correlates positively with a country's economic output. Despite this fact, Africa's skill level has increased insignificantly since independence, a 3.3% economic growth notwithstanding (Industrial Development Corporation, 2013). The importance of schools and universities is preparing citizens for life through development of skills This development through provision of literacy and numeracy skills help to open job opportunities (Cazes & Verick, 2013).

The second hypothesis: There is no significant positive relationship between Gender disparity (male/female) and unemployment in Delta state.
The second hypothesis state is tested revealed that there is significant relationship between Gender disparity (male/ female) and unemployment in Delta State. This finding is consistent with Moser (2009) who explained that men are more distressed than women due to unemployment. The levels of equal opportunity in the labour market and in the family will have real consequences for the way in which gender influences the association between unemployment [Mattias et al., 2013]. Employment rates comparatively parallel to that of men, women in such a framework should face quite similar offshoot of traditional patriarchy which gives preference to men in every facet of life and economic pressures as men when unemployed. The magnitude should be small gender differences in the relationship between unemployment. Numerous foremost scholars have also put forwarded this is a needed direction for understanding the relationship (Hammarstro¨m et al. 2011).

Conclusion and Recommendation

Conclusion

The following conclusions are made based on the findings of the study

Unemployment occurs as a result of the insufficiency of jobs to meet with the growing population, even those who are employed live with the fear of being rendered unemployed due to job insecurity, economic recession and retrenchment of workers. The study also revealed that gender disparity (male/female) are common in terms of employment, the male has more privilege in occupying the most significant position with more pay than the female even though they may be qualify than the male gender.The levels of education/ specialist qualification have also contributed to both employment and unemployment in Delta State. Those with specialist qualifications are more likely to get a job than those without specialist qualification.

Recommendations

1) Government should provide facilities in the rural area in other for those living in the rural area to stay and be gainfully employed in the rural area.
2) The issue of gender disparity and unemployment should be addressed and the domineering influence of patriarchy should be de-emphasized so that male/female with same qualification should be treated with equity.
3) Government should encourage mass education by making provisions for grants, scholarship and loans.

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