

**CHANGING EMPLOYMENT CONTEXT AS A STRATEGY FOR ENDING  
AGITATION OF SELF-DETERMINATION IN SOUTHEAST NIGERIA**

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**Abstract**

South East Nigeria has witnessed series of social unrest as a result of self-determination and this has resulted to loss of lives, properties and decline in Internally Generated Revenue (IGR) in the state which has been ascribed to the rising of unemployment rate. This study seeks to examine changing employment context as a strategy for ending agitation of self-determination in South East Nigeria with a particular study of Anambra State. The study adopted survey research design. The population will be drawn from the people who live in the Anambra State. Purposive sampling technique will be used to select Anambra State among the six South East Nigeria States. Simple random sampling technique will also be used to select the sample size of the study. The instrument for data collection will be questionnaire structured on four (4) point Likert scale. The questionnaire items will be based on the research questions. Pilot study will be used to test the reliability of the study and the coefficient value obtained that is 0.60 and above will be taken to mean that the instrument is reliable for the study. The study will adopt the use of mean score to analyse data gotten from the copies of the questionnaire while simple regression analysis will be used to test the formulated hypotheses. The results will be highlighted, conclusion reached and recommendations made.

**Keywords:** Agitation, Employment, Employment Context, Self-Determination, Southeast.

**Introduction**

One of the attributes of the structure of the Nigerian state that easily catches the attention of close watchers is her multi-ethnic composition. Nigeria came into being as a direct consequence of colonialism (Odum, 2016). Prior to the incursion of the colonialists, different groups had existed separately within the vast area that eventually formed part of the Nigerian project. It is in this regard that Mimiko and Adeyemi (2005), describe the country as “a union of diverse largely autonomous ethnic nationalities that had existed under distinct political arrangements like empires, kingdoms, chiefdoms, city-states and caliphate”. Just like most

other multi-ethnic African states that went through colonial experience, the colonialists did not seek the consent of the various groups before fusing them into one entity.

Subsequently, the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (CFRN) (as Amended) provides that Nigeria is one indivisible and indissoluble Sovereign Nation (40). It further provided that nobody or group of persons can take over government or any part of Nigeria, except as provided for in the Constitution (41). The framers of the CFRN 1999 (as Amended) did not envisage a time when one minority group, or any other group for that matter, would clamour to opt out of the federal structure via pushing for self-determination or autonomy as no provision for such was made therein. In the wording of the Constitution, the union of Nigeria appears to be iron-cast and non-negotiable, considering the fact that the CFRN 1999 (as Amended) is supreme and its provisions are binding on all authorities and persons throughout the Nation (42). These provisions by virtue of being contained in the CFRN 1999 (as Amended) are deemed sacrosanct.

The agitation for secession in Nigeria has continued unabated even with the return of democracy in Nigeria in 1999. It is presently being championed by Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) and the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB). The agitation had reached an alarming rate leading to the proscription of IPOB as a terrorist organization. Their major complaint is that they have suffered marginalization, injustice and have not benefited optimally from the distribution of socio-political projects. Their grumble is also centered around the claim of intimidation by the Hausa-Yoruba tribes which has led to deprivation of representation in the high echelon of the federal government, victimization as a result of their race, discriminatory access to justice, and degradation of cultural and language rights.

According to Nsoedo (2019), the Igbo people of South East Nigeria in reality experienced an overwhelming level of disadvantages based on public policies that seemed crafted to undermine their ability to maximize political and economic potentials. The restructuring of Nigeria to create more states for the northern states to the detriment of the Southern Nigeria, especially, the Southeast was not only an impediment politically; it impacts the economic potentials of the Igbo people negatively. Such policies as the failure to rehabilitate the Biafra land after the war, the 20 pounds flat refund to any Biafran who wished to convert the old currency, or deposits with banks prior to the war; the Nigerian Enterprises Promotion Decree of 1972, also known as Indigenization Decree, Federal Character Principle allegedly manipulated population census, creation of states and local government areas in favour of the Northern Nigeria, deliberate underuse of seaports within the Igbo axis, lack of standard international airport, and other exploitative actions. These formed many overt and indirect actions to diminish the ability of the Igbo people to compete on a level-playing ground with other major ethnic groups and these circumstances have given rise to continuous agitation for the republic of Biafra.

The Igbo people and the continuous allegations of being marginalized have formed the basis of several crises and loss of lives in Nigeria. Their allegations of marginalization originated from perceived denial of their rights in the manner at which national leadership positions were distributed in the country for sixty years and counting. Critically, when considered in line with other tribes, there seems to be a systematic denial of sense of belonging to the Igbo people especially in development and leadership positions. This perceived denial of supposed national rights over the years has placed the Igbos on the verge of complain of being marginalized. In this regard, some Igbo activists capitalize on this perceived marginalization

and subjugation of the Igbos to form different agitation secession groups to press home the Biafran agenda.

Up till 2018, the area has continued to express several acts of State neglect over the yearning of the populace, bad governance, and alleged marginalization of the geo-political zone by the federal authorities especially since after the civil war (Ofoeze, 2009). This development has led to the expression of agitations and formation of sectarian groups in the zone, as the State has virtually remained adamant or non-challant to the entrenchment of the use of dialogue in bringing about social justice and equity in certain sections of the country, especially, the South East. However, the survival of the Nigerian youth especially those from Igbo extraction have continued to be made difficult, precarious and vulnerable. Their deepening socio-economic predicament and circumstances have resulted to a perpetual fear of the future and a state of uncertainty. The state has failed to develop an enabling environment and genuine ways of properly engaging the youth to enable them contribute their quota to national development (Alozie, 2017). In view of these situations, unemployment has continued to grow thereby increase the agitations of self-determination.

According to a report published by National Bureau of Statistics (2021), the jobless rate in Nigeria rose to 33.3% in the three months through December. That is up from 27.1% in the second quarter of 2020, the last period for which the agency released labor-force statistics. The report further stated that a third of the 69.7 million-strong labor force in Africa's most-populous nation either did nothing or worked for less than 20 hours a week, making them unemployed. Another 15.9 million worked less than 40 hours a week, making them underemployed. Sadly, the figure is projected to increase further in 2022, which might likely increase the crime rate in the country (National Bureau of Statistics, 2021).

In view of the forgoing discussions, in South East Nigeria these situations seem to aggravate and add to the agitations of secessions. Unfortunately, there are scarcities of literature on trying to use changing the context of employment to end agitations in South East, Nigeria. This has created gap in knowledge because nobody seems to look at this direction. It is on this ground of filling the gap in knowledge of using changing employment context in ending agitations in South East Nigeria this paper was borne.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The attempt for Biafra secession from Nigeria in 1967 was not the first of its kind in Nigeria. According to Alumona, Azam, and Iloh (2017), the secession attempt itself was the culmination of the various contradictions within the Nigerian state. Various constitutions had been negotiated and adopted prior to 1966, but none addressed the fundamental social differences, political tensions, economic competition and ethnic imbalances that the Nigerian state had struggled with since amalgamation. Unfortunately, the Nigerian government has not helped the situation because the unemployment rate still soars high, which seems to fuel the agitations. It is on this ground of changing the context of employment in ending the agitation in South East Nigeria that this paper was borne.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The general objective of the study is to ascertain the use of changing employment context in ending agitations in South East Nigeria. The specific objectives are:

1. To ascertain how the present employment context in Nigeria contributes to agitations for succession in South East Nigeria.

2. To determine ways of using employment generation to end agitations for succession in South East Nigeria.

### **Research Question**

The following research questions guided the study.

1. How does the present employment context in Nigeria contribute to agitations for succession in South East Nigeria?
2. What are the ways through which employment generation can be used to end agitations for succession in South East Nigeria?

### **Hypothesis**

The null hypothesis below was tested at 0.05 significant level.

H<sub>0</sub>: The present employment context in Nigeria contributes to agitations for succession in South East Nigeria.

### **Literature Review**

The South East geo-political zone is among the multi-ethnic and heterogeneous groups that make up the political entity known as Nigeria. In the region, there has remained a lot of unresolved contending issues, some of which had earlier, contributed to the Nigeria –Biafra war of 1967-1970. Up till 2018, the area has continued to express several acts of State neglect over the yearning of the populace, bad governance, and alleged marginalization of the geo-political zone by the federal authorities especially since after the civil war (Ofoeze, 2009). This development has led to the expression of agitations and formation of sectarian groups in the zone, as the State has virtually remained adamant or non-challant to the entrenchment of the use of dialogue in bringing about social justice and equity in certain sections of the country, especially, the South East. Series of unresolved ethnic and minority complaints as well as other contending national issues heralded Nigeria's political independence in 1960. The haphazard manner the Nigerian State attended to some of the agitations was most unfair and unsatisfactory. The aftermath of the lacklustre attitude of the Nigerian State especially against the people of Eastern Nigeria then was the outbreak of the Nigeria-Biafra War that lasted between July 1967- January 1970.

It is well-known that unemployment not only causes material hardship due to the associated loss in income, but also that it enforces the deprivation of social, psychological and non-pecuniary benefits provided by employment. Many empirical studies have documented the severe consequences of unemployment for individuals' subjective well-being (Kassenböhmer&Haisken-DeNew, 2009), health outcomes (Schmitz, 2011) or patterns of social participation (Kunze and Suppa, 2017). However, while the effects on the life of those directly affected are well documented, the effect on their spouses has received less attention. In fact, only a few recent studies address the consequences of unemployment for the indirectly affected spouse, see Marcus (2013) for mental health outcomes and Nikolova and Ayhan (2016) for individuals' life-satisfaction.

In addition, previous research also suggests that unemployment may bear a serious challenge for a relationship as it increases the probability of divorce (Doiron&Mendolia, 2012). Moreover, Anderberg et al. (2016) theorise and document a nuanced relation between gender-specific unemployment rates and domestic violence. Interestingly and in line with these findings, classical studies about unemployment conducted in the early 1930s, long before modern welfare states have been installed, mirror both reduced social activities and increased tension within the families (Komarovskiy, 2004).

### Theoretical Framework

This paper is anchored on relative deprivation theory by Runciman (1966). As defined by social theorists and political scientists, relative deprivation theory suggests that people who feel they are being deprived of something considered essential in their society (e.g. money, rights, political voice, status) will organize or join social movements dedicated to obtaining the things of which they feel deprived. In some cases, relative deprivation has been cited as a factor driving incidents of social disorder like rioting, looting, terrorism, and civil wars. In this nature, social movements and their associated disorderly acts can often be attributed to the grievances of people who feel they are being denied resources to which they are entitled (Longley, 2021).

Relative Deprivation theorists believe that political discontent and its consequences—protest, instability, violence, revolution—depend not only on the absolute level of economic well-being, but also on the distribution of wealth. In relation to this paper, when the people feel that they are not getting enough from the government or feel marginalized, they agitate (Nagel, 1974). This is some of the cases when some separatist groups have emerged such as the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereignty of Biafra (MASOB) and the Indigenous People of Biafra.

### Method

The study adopted survey research design. The population were drawn from the people who live in the Anambra State. This study adopted multi-stage sampling technique where purposive sampling technique was used to select Anambra State among the six South East Nigeria States. Anambra State has 21 local government areas and these local government areas were used to form three (3) clusters where 7 local government areas were placed in each cluster. Stratified sampling technique was used to select a total of 200 persons from these three clusters. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire structured on four (4) point Likert scale. The questionnaire items were based on the research questions. Pilot study was used to test the reliability of the study and the coefficient value obtained was 0.81, considered reliable and fit for the study. The researcher used online questionnaire through WhatsApp to reach out to the respondents since most of them were using social media and most of their activities were conducted through WhatsApp. More so, due to security reasons, most of the respondents prefer to respond through WhatsApp and that gave the reason for conducting the exercise online. At the end of the exercise, 178, which is 89% of the respondents successfully completed and submitted the questionnaire used for the analysis. The study adopted the use of simple percentage to analyse data gotten from the online questionnaire while simple regression analysis was used to test the formulated hypotheses.

### Results

The results are presented below.

**Figure 1: Gender Distributions of the respondents**

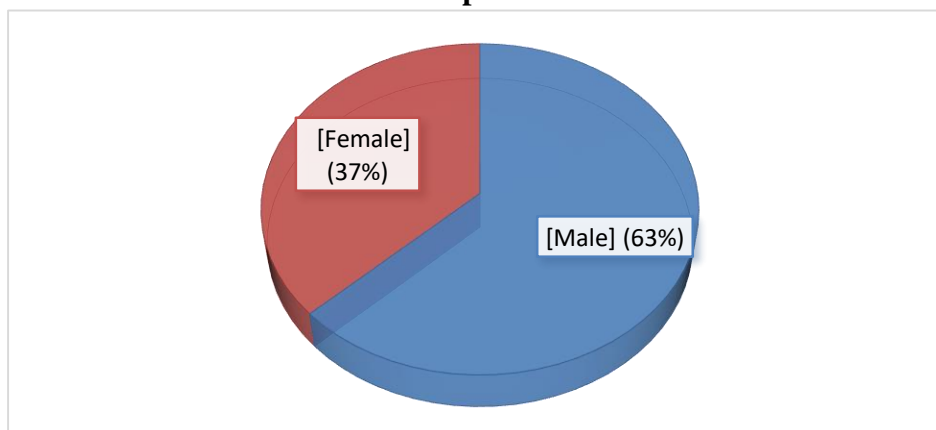


Figure 1 revealed that 63% of the respondents were male while 37% of the respondents were female. This implies that more male participated in the exercise than the female population in the area.

**Figure 2: Distribution of the Age Range of the Respondents**

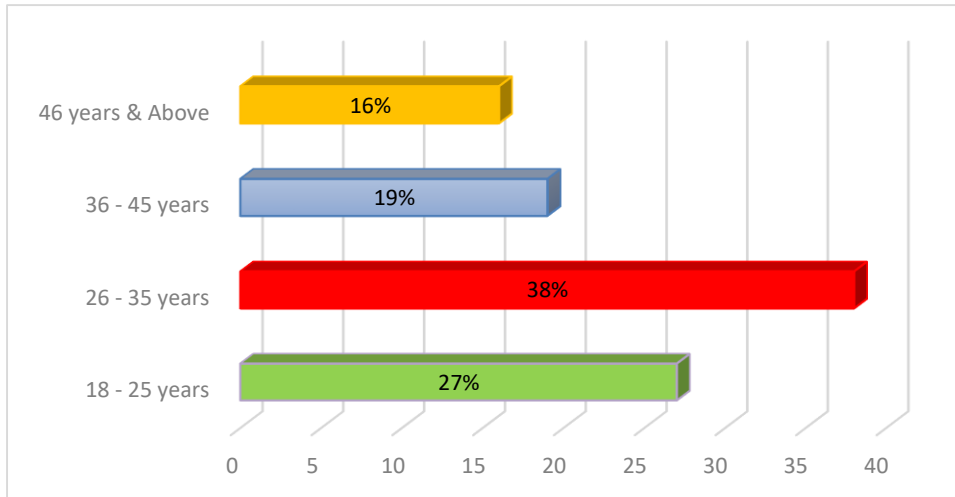


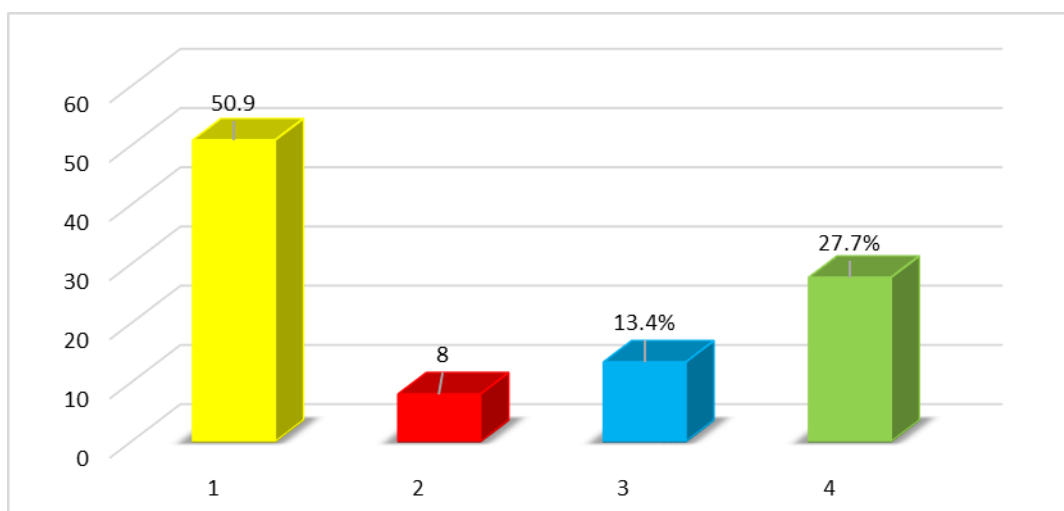
Figure 2 shows the distributions of the age range of the respondents. From the figure, 16% of the respondents were those between the age range of 46 years and above, those between 36 – 45 years made up 19% of the population while those between 26 – 35 years had 38% and those between the ages of 18 – 25 years have 27%. This simply means that the people that responded more to the questionnaire were those between 26 years and 35 years.

**Table 1: Occupational Status of the Respondents**

S/N	Occupational Status	Frequency	Percent (%)
1	Unemployed	77	43.26
2	Civil servant	22	12.36
3	Business man/woman	37	20.79
4	Students	41	23.59
<b>Total</b>		<b>177</b>	<b>100</b>

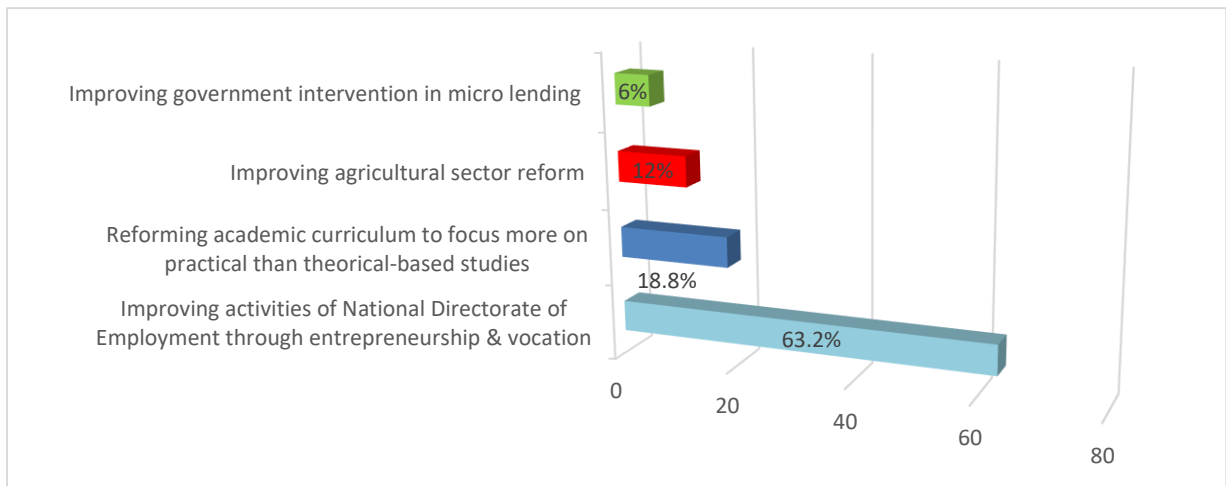
Table 1 shows that 43.26% of the respondents were unemployed, 12.36% of the respondents were civil servant, and 20.79% of the respondents were business men and women while 23.59% of the respondents were students. This result indicated that majority of the respondents were unemployed.

**Figure 3: Responses on Major Contributor to Agitations in South East, Nigeria**



The results in figure 3 revealed that majority of the respondents believed that ineffective agenda of National Directorate of Nigeria by emphasizing on entrepreneurship, and vocational education among others were some of the reasons agitations were on the rise in South East, Nigeria.

**Figure 4: Respondents Views on Changing Employment Context as Solution to Agitations in South East Nigeria**



Based on the respondents of the respondents, majority of the respondents believed that improving the activities of the Nigerian National Directorate of Employment by emphasizing on entrepreneurship, vocational education to mention these few. These imply that the increase of the employment rate of the respondents have the ability of reducing the agitations in South East Nigeria

**Test of Hypothesis**

The hypothesis below was tested at 0.05 significant level.

H<sub>0</sub>: The present employment context of Nigeria contributes to agitations for succession in South East Nigeria.

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		

1	(Constant)	-1.260	.202		-6.239	.000
	Changing employment context	1.204	.057	.845	20.959	.009
<b>Model Summary</b>						
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
1	.845 <sup>a</sup>	.714	.712	.705		

a. Predictors: (Constant), Changing employment context

b. Dependent Variable: Agitations

The results of the hypothesis showed that the present employment context of Nigeria contributes to 71.4% of the agitations for succession in South East Nigeria. More so, the p-value (0.009) is less than the significant level (0.005), which signifies that the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis retained. Thus, present employment context of Nigeria contributes to 71.4% of the agitations for succession in South East Nigeria.

### Discussion of the Findings

Based on the results of the study, present employment context of Nigeria contributes to 71.4% of the agitations for succession in South East Nigeria. In affirmation, Nichols, Mitchell, and Lindner (2013) found that unemployment can plausibly affect individuals, families, and communities in direct ways. When individuals are out of work, their skills may erode through lack of use. That erosion or “depreciation of human capital” increases as time passes, meaning that the potential wages the unemployed can earn on finding a new job and even the chances of finding a new job decrease the longer they are out of work. More so, Browning and Crossley (2001) find that families with an unemployed worker have consumption 16 percent lower after six months of unemployment, but 24 percent lower if the sole worker in the family became unemployed, relative to those who do not lose employment.

Consumption drops less than income following unemployment in part because of borrowing or spending down savings, which is far from costless. Borie-Holtz, Van Horn, and Zukin (2010) show that the unemployed borrowed money from friends, spent down savings, and missed mortgage or rent payments. About half of unemployed workers reported a poor financial situation in 2010, and about a tenth had filed for bankruptcy (Godofsky, Van Horn, and Zukin 2010). In view of these findings, agitations arise and, in some cases, these unemployed especially the youths just like the agitations for the secessions of South East, Nigeria.

### Conclusion

It was concluded that unemployment is one of the contributory factors of agitations in South East Nigeria. This is because when individuals are out of work, their skills may erode through lack of use. That erosion or “depreciation of human capital” increases as time passes, meaning that the potential wages the unemployed can earn on finding a new job and even the chances of finding a new job decrease the longer they are out of work. More so, families with an unemployed worker have consumption 16 percent lower after six months of unemployment, but 24 percent lower if the sole worker in the family became unemployed, relative to those who do not lose employment. On this note, changing the employment context becomes part of the solutions in ending the agitations in the region.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings of this paper, the following recommendations were made;



1. State and federal government should form synergy in improving agricultural sector reform for the youths to leverage on.
2. Government should improve government intervention in micro lending so as to encourage the youth participations in small and medium enterprises
3. Government should strengthen and improving the activities of National Directorate of Employment by emphasizing on entrepreneurship, vocational education etc.
4. The Ministry of Education should reform the academic curriculum to focus more on practical than theoretical-based studies.

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