

INDECENT WORK AND WORKERS IN THE INFORMAL SECTOR IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The expansion of informal sector activities in Nigeria provides an insight into how this sector has been serving as a safety-belt in providing employment and income to people outside the formal sector. The persistent and expanding informal sector offers a ray of hope for employment and earnings for unskilled and semi skilled labour as well as the skilled but unemployed. This study therefore investigated the nature of the environment of work in the informal sector and its impact on the workers in Nigeria. Three research questions were formulated for this study. The methodology is descriptive and the secondary data collection method was used in collecting relevant data. Equity Theory is adopted as the framework for analysis in this study. The findings revealed that concept of decent work as developed by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in 1999 which describe opportunities for men and women to obtain decent and productive work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity has not been attained in the informal sector in Nigeria. This study recommends that more effort should be made to ensure wholesome application of the Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP), orchestrated by ILO, to liberate workers in the informal sector in Nigerian from unwholesome trade and unfair labour practices.

Keywords: Indecent Work, Informal Sector, Nigeria, Worker

Introduction

In the new global economy, the informal sector of national economies has become a central issue among governments and researchers in terms of being an alternative and available source of employment and income opportunities. This, according to the International Labour workers still face a concatenation of challenges in the work environment of the informal sector Organization (ILO 2002) is because:

The bulk of new employment in recent years, particularly in developing and transition countries, has been in the informal economy. In Africa, for instance, informal work accounted for almost 80 per cent of non-agricultural employment, over 60 per cent of urban employment and over 90 per cent of new jobs over the past decade or so.

However, despite the fact that the informal sectors of these national economies have potentially become parallel employers of labour and sources of income for individuals and households,.

The National Bureau of Statistics (2010:2) states that “unemployment in Nigeria is one of the most critical problems the country is facing. The years of corruption, civil war, military rule, and mismanagement have hindered economic growth of the country”. Various other reasons have also been put forward by scholars with regards to the failure of the formal sector of the Nigerian economy to generate adequate employment and income opportunities. The reasons include income inequality, poor economic policy formulation and weak implementation, dearth of infrastructure, inadequate technological skills, etc (Akintoye, 2008; Awoyemi, 2012; Duru, 2012). As the ability of the formal economy to provide employment and income opportunities declined, an informal sector gradually developed. The aim of this informal sector was to fulfil the yearnings of countless job seekers in terms of employment and income opportunities. The informal sector thus became what Khotkina (2007) described as a major provider of employment especially in developing and transitional economies to which Nigeria belong.

The informal sector of a national economy therefore describes that sector “which operates without binding official regulations as well as one that operates under official regulations that do not compel rendition of official returns on its operations or production process” (NBS, 2010:51). This sector encompasses those productive economic activities which exist outside direct government regulation. Where the government is involved, the involvement is not at par with its involvement in the formal economy. Activities in the informal sector span across petty trading, personal services, construction, transport, money lending, manufacturing, and other services such as repairing all types of vehicles, radio and television sets, refrigerators, hair dressing and carpentry (NBS, 2010; Fasanya and Onakoya, 2012).

People who work in the informal sector desire certain opportunities which they believe will make their work much secure, productive as well as dignifying. In other words, they desire decent work environment in their places of work. Despite these subsisting desire, it appears work in the informal sector in Nigeria cannot be termed ‘decent’ compared to recognized, protected, secure, and formal employment. Therefore, “workers in the informal sector face lot of challenges and trade unions have found it difficult in organizing workers in this sector” (Awojobi et al, 2014:303). This becomes alarming when one considers the assertion that the present world economic meltdown has bred a dangerous work environment where many desperate job seekers in the labour force are willing to take any job for survival purposes rather than dignity (Rasaq, 2010). This paper aims

at investigating the concatenation of challenges workers still face in the work environment of the informal sector in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Whereas informal workers constitute over 80 per cent of the Nigerian population contributing over 65 per cent of the GDP, the environment of work of informal workers remain makeshift, hazardous and precarious; regulatory controls remain oppressive, contradictory and uncoordinated with informal workers suffering needless harassment, intimidation and extortion in the streets daily (Ahiuma-Young, 2012). When compared to people employed in the formal sector, workers in the informal sector face serious predicament in the society despite the Nigerian government's collaboration with the ILO in the Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP) since 2005. Castells and Portes (1989:13) identified the precarious environment of the informal sector to include "poor health conditions, safety hazards and unfriendly labour laws".

In addition, the working environment of the informal sector in Nigeria appears characterized by excruciating travails, vulnerabilities as well as imbalances. Workers seem to contend daily with abysmally poor wages and irregular work hours among others. The idea of basic benefits (bonuses, leave, and medical assistance) is more or less non-existent. These constitute the problem which this study investigates.

Research Questions

Based on the problems identified above, the following research questions are necessary to sharpen the focus of this study. These questions are:

1. What is the origin of the informal sector in Nigeria?
2. Is work in the informal sector in Nigeria decent?
3. What are the challenges confronting the informal sector in Nigeria as a result of decent work deficits?

Objective of the Study

This study aims to ascertain the effect of indecent work conditions on workers in Nigeria's' informal sector. In its specificity, its objectives include:

- 1) Highlight the origin of the informal sector of the Nigerian economy.
- 2) Ascertain if the environment in which workers in the informal sector carry out their work is decent.
- 3) Examine the challenges confronting the informal sector in Nigeria as a result of decent work deficits.

Significance of the Study

Attempts have been made to improve the environment of work in the informal sector in Nigeria. Despite these attempts and the different strategies suggested and adopted to improve decency of work in the informal sector, the sector is still largely characterised by decent work deficiencies unlike in the formal sector. The significance of this study therefore, derives from its attempt to highlight the critical role occupied by the informal sector as it relates to employment creation in particular and the development of the Nigerian economy in general. It further emphasizes that there is urgent need for formulation and implementation of policies that reduce decent work deficits in the informal sector in Nigeria.

This study will add to the existing literature on the informal sector of the Nigerian economy and as such, serve as a source of information on this often neglected and important economic unit of most developing economies. This is in the area of presenting to the government, its agencies and economic policy makers a crucial understanding of the various deficiencies in terms of indecency of work to which workers in the informal sector are exposed to. Hence, it is expected that its recommendations would provide veritable opportunities to ameliorate the highlighted critical constraints.

Theoretical Framework

Many theories could be found to be adequate for analysis of a study of this nature. However, the Equity Theory developed by John Adams (1965) would be adopted from among these theories as the framework for analysis in this study. According to Armstrong (2006:261), “equity theory is concerned with the perceptions people have about how they are being treated compared to others”. It attempts to explain that dissatisfaction results when people who work in exchange for payment in the society perceive they are treated unequally. When the reverse is the case, they become motivated. The postulations of this theory could be generalized to a macro level to show that workers in the informal sector feel dissatisfied because they perceive that workers in the formal sector are treated much better than they are.

Methodology

The research method adopted in this study is the descriptive research method. Data were collected solely from secondary sources. The literature reviewed and analysed consists of both academic and popular publications along with unpublished reports. The aim is to access information which will aid in the basic understanding of the concepts decent work deficit and informal sector. It also emphasized the role of the informal sector in the development of the Nigerian economy as an alternative source of work and employment.

The Informal Sector in Nigeria

The Nigeria Ministry of Labour and Productivity is of the view that the informal sector of the nation’s economy accounts for no less than 90% of new job openings in Nigeria (Ahiuma-Young and Adeniyi, 2008). In the same vein, the Lagos office of Federal Ministry of Labour declared that the informal sector accounts for 80 per cent of non-agricultural employment, 60 per cent of urban employment and over 90 per cent of new jobs in Nigeria (Ahiuma-Young and Adeniyi, 2008). In essence, the Nigerian economy presently has the bulk of its economic activities coming from the informal sector. The implication of this is that the informal sector is the place where majority of Nigerians are employed and derive their source of living. It therefore, contributes significantly to the national economy in terms of employment and income sourcing. Osalor (2011) describes the informal economy as:

The sum total of economic activity that happens outside state regulation, which is neither taxed nor represented in a country’s GDP. It includes a range of goods and services – from handicrafts and street traders to farm labour and money lending – that, by tradition or necessity, operate outside formal regulation and are often times marked by a lack of social benefits. In the case of Nigeria, it accounts for a considerable chunk of the formal economy.

As a result of recent developments, the nature and characteristics of the informal sector in general have been classified as traditional and current as summarised in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Traditional and Current View of the Informal Sector

The Traditional View	The Current View
The informal sector is the traditional economy that will wither away and die with modern, industrial growth	The informal economy is increasing with modern, industrial growth – accounting for more than half of the new jobs in Latin America and 80 percent of new jobs in Africa. In India, more than 90 percent of the labour force is in it. It is a feature of economic transition as well as capitalist industrialisation.
It is only marginally productive.	Virtually everywhere the informal economy is efficient and resilient, creating jobs. It is a major provider of employment, goods and services for lower-income groups. It contributes significantly to GDP.
It exists separately from the formal economy	It is linked to the formal economy – it produces for, trades with, distributes for, and provides services to the formal economy.
It represents a reserve pool of surplus labour.	Much of the recent rise in informality reflects the decline in formal employment associated with structural adjustment and global competition. It reflects not only the incapacity of formal firms to absorb labour, but also their unwillingness to do so.
Most of those in the sector are entrepreneurs of illegal and unregistered enterprises seeking to avoid regulation and taxation	It should not be equated with the criminal or illegal economy. It is made up of non-standard wage workers as well as entrepreneurs and self-employed persons producing legal goods and services, albeit through irregular or unregulated means. Most entrepreneurs and the self-employed are amenable to, and would welcome, efforts to reduce barriers to registration and related transaction costs and to increase benefits from regulation. Most non-standard workers would also welcome more stable jobs and workers' rights.
Work in the informal economy is comprised mostly of survival activities and thus is not a subject for economic policy.	Informal enterprises include not only survival activities but also stable enterprises and dynamic growing businesses. All informal enterprises are affected by economic
It comprises mainly of unregistered business.	It comprises not only of informal enterprises but also of informal jobs, including employees of informal firms, casual day labourers, and domestic workers as well as industrial outworkers and other non-standard workers in both informal and formal firms.
It comprises mostly of street traders and very small-scale producers.	It is made up of a wide range of informal arrangements- both "resilient old forms" and "emerging new ones" (temporary and part-time jobs plus home-based work for high tech industries). Its two basic segments are informal enterprises and informal jobs.
It is unregulated.	Some informal enterprises (such as street vendors) are highly regulated, so much so that regulations are impossible to enforce or comply with and are often not clear either to local authorities or to vendors. Regulations become a tool of harassment and control, not a way to encourage economic contributions of street vendors. On the other hand, the employers of most informal workers often seek to avoid complying with labour legislation.
Because it is unregulated and untaxed, many working in the informal sector are wealthy.	Average incomes are lower in the informal economy than in the formal economy. A higher percentage of people working in the informal economy are micro entrepreneurs who hire others. The poorest are, typically, informal wagedworkers, especially industrial outworkers.
To regulate the informal economy is unnecessary interference with its workings.	In today's globalised economy, the active role of government is needed in the regulation of economic activities, including the informal economy. Clear rules and appropriate legislation are needed to regulate the relationship between governments, foreign investors, local enterprises, and the workforce.
Street traders are to blame for crime in the inner sites.	Criminals are a threat to business interests of both formal and informal enterprises.

It does not contribute to economic growth.	It contributes substantially to the economy and needs to be encouraged and facilitated.
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Sources: Becker (2004); Onwe (2013)

From Table 1 therefore, it is safe to suggest that the informal sector reinforces the existence of a parallel but unregulated economic cum productive activities alongside a dwindling formal sector in Nigeria. It is a precarious employment sector. The economic activities are mainly micro-oriented although some have been known to grow and attain relative extensive proportions and investment. These economic activities are mostly established through the personal effort or savings of individuals or cooperatives since credit facilities are difficult for them to access. The informal sector is characterized by small scale operations, labour intensive techniques, low-income families, private and indigenous ownership of enterprises that are largely unprotected by government (Lawanson, 2011). The purpose is mainly survivalist as their energies are usually directed towards the provision of subsistence to self and families. Informal sector activities range from small scale businesses to businesses which have attained larger economic proportions. It is therefore not surprising that the diverseness of the business activities in the informal sector has made it become a major source of employment in Nigeria.

Table 2: Statistics of Informal Sector Workers in Nigeria

Sector	Num. Employed	% Employed
Agriculture, Forestry and Farming	14,837,693	30.5
Wholesale and Retail trade, Repair of Motor Vehicles and Motor Cycles	12,097,189	24.9
Manufacturing	5,337,000	11.0
Other Service Activities	3,471,702	7.1
Accommodation and Food Services Activities	2,730,308	5.6
Transportation and Storage	2,009,183	4.1
Education	1,557,665	3.2
Construction	1,142,569	2.4
Administrative and Support Activities	986,480	2.0
Public Administration and Defence, Compulsory Social Security	800,333	1.6
Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities	779,209	1.6
Human, Health and Social Work	739,209	1.5
Activities of Household as Employers, Undifferentiated Goods	551,353	1.1
Information and Communication	469,513	1.0
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	390,275	0.8
Financial and Insurance Activities	171,403	0.4
Electricity, Gas Steam and Air-Conditioning Supply	152,610	0.3
Mining and Quarrying	146,488	0.3
Water Supply, Sewage, Waste Management and Remediation Activities	86,778	0.2
Activities of Extra-Territorial Organizations and Bodies	75,633	0.2
Real Estate Activities	68,697	0.1
Total	48,602,017	100

Sources: NBS 2010; Awojobi et al. 2014.

How did the dominance of the informal economy come about? Nigeria witnessed an unprecedented oil boom in the 1970s. This consequently earned the nation billions in petro-dollars. Sadly, various military governments and several intertwining civilian governments possessed neither the ability and nor the will to invest the excess earnings in the non-oil sectors of the Nigerian economy. Rather than invest the billions of petro-dollars accruing to the national account, what was obtained was mismanagement, misappropriation, out-right embezzlement,

corruption, economic and political instability, adoption of non-inclusive policies, etc by the political class which combined to eviscerate the economy. Thereafter, the Nigerian economy crashed and several efforts by government to revive the ailing economy rather seemed to worsen the situation (Abiola and Oladeji, 1998; Akinbobola and Saibu, 2004; Amaghionyeodiwe, 2009; Arosanyin et al, 2011; Awojobi et al, 2014).

Beginning, in the late 70s and early 80s, with the Austerity Measures and up to the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), government down-sized and right-sized its agencies and establishments to reverse the nations dwindling fortunes. In the process, thousands of workers lost their jobs. Furthermore, because the petro-dollars had been depleted, an extensive number of industries were forced to close for want of raw materials, machines and infrastructure which supply also dwindled. More people became redundant and consequently added to the already swollen numbers of the unemployed. Unemployment and poverty attained frightening heights as several macro-economic policies consistently failed, one after the other, to remedy the economic slump. According to Osalor (2011), the resulting Nigerian paradox describes the massive macro-economic imbalances that pushed a country brimming with natural and human resources into catastrophic poverty. Nigeria thus became what Ukwu (2002) describes as one of the poorest of the poor among the nations of the world, confronted not just with pockets of poverty, disadvantaged or marginalized areas, groups and individuals but with a situation in which most of the population exist at standards of living below those required for full development and enjoyment of individual and societal well-being. From this predicament was therefore created, room for the emergence and rapid growth of an overwhelming informal sector which exist outside the immediate supervision of the state.

The informal sector which gradually arose provided families with employment while enabling them to meet their basic needs and increase their wellbeing (Grossman, 1982). At the same time, “the large decline of the official GDP [Nigeria] experienced was alleviated through rapid growth of the informal sector” (Gerxhani 2002:23). The informal sector thus enabled Nigerians, who would otherwise have remained unemployed and dependent, to secure and provide for themselves casual employment and income opportunities. Despite these eminent contributions, workers in the informal sector began to be confronted by serious predicament in Nigeria.

Decent Work and the Informal Sector in Nigeria

The International Labour Organization (ILO, 1999; 2009) refers to decent work as:

Opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families; better prospects for personal development and social integration; freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives; and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men.

On its part, the Trade Union Congress (TUC, 2012:7) opines that a decent work is one that “enables someone to work and live in conditions of [relative] dignity, freedom, and equity”. To an extent, the above mentioned characteristics are found in the formal sector. This is largely because the government and its agencies actively participate in the formal sector by regulating the activities of all the interests involved. The same level of government participation or regulation by the government and its agencies could not be said to be obtained in the informal sector.

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2002), the situation of informal workers and entrepreneurs can be assessed in terms of the following seven essential securities:

- a. **Labour Market Security** This has to do with adequate employment opportunities through high levels of employment ensured by macro-economic policies.
- b. **Employment Security** This is in terms of protection against arbitrary dismissal, regulation on hiring and firing, employment stability compatible with economic dynamism.
- c. **Job Security** This is a niche designated as an occupation or “career”, the opportunity to develop a sense of occupation through enhancing competences.
- d. **Work Security** This represents protection against accidents and illness at work through safety and health regulations, limits on working time, etc.
- e. **Skills Reproduction Security** Existence of widespread opportunities to gain and retain skills through innovative means, as well as apprenticeships and employment training.
- f. **Income Security** There should be provision of adequate income.
- g. **Representation Security** The protection of collective voice in the labour market through independent trade unions and employers’ organizations and social dialogue institutions.

A close look at the above as it relates to the informal sector in Nigeria becomes crucial to determine the level of decent work obtained. One of the indicators in the decent work classification above is the ample existence of opportunities for work that is productive and yields fair incomes to workers. This implies that work in the informal sectors should be productive and the remuneration thereof qualitative. For many in the informal sector in Nigeria, the reality is different from the decent work indices highlighted above. Unlike in the formal sector, the income structure in the informal sector cannot also be said to be streamlined. The reality is that because a lot of people are unemployed, employment conditions in the informal sector are therefore determined by the employers. This is supported by Ghai (2002:14) when he opined that “work opportunities must be considered scarce in countries where a large proportion of the labour force has to hunt around for uncertain and miserable earnings inadequate to support a minimum standard of living for the family”.

The predominant features of the informal sector in Nigeria include “general precariousness, poor payments, and non-coverage by labour legislation or social protection” (Fapohunda, 2012:104). The Nigerian informal sector is not formally organized. In this sector, workers are employed without formal contracts. Sometimes, the hours are not regular. Employment benefits or social security are nonexistent. A large proportion of workers in this sector earn less than a dollar a day, thereby earning less than the minimum set by the World Bank. There also exists a preponderance of “poor-quality, unproductive and un-remunerative jobs that are not recognized or protected by law, the absence of rights at work, inadequate social protection, and the lack of representation and voice are most pronounced in the informal economy, especially at the bottom end among women and young workers” (ILO, 2002:4). There also exists preponderance of issues of occupational health and safety, job security and poor remuneration.

Shedding more light on the Nigerian situation, the General Secretary, Federation of Informal Workers of Nigeria (FIWON), Comrade Gbenga Komolafe observes that “whereas informal workers constitute over 80 per cent of the Nigerian population contributing over 65 per cent of the GDP, the environment of work of informal workers remain makeshift, hazardous and precarious; regulatory controls remain oppressive, contradictory and uncoordinated with informal workers suffering needless harassment, intimidation and extortion in the streets daily” (Vanguard June 1, 2012). In addition, workers in the informal sector are worse off than those of the

formal sector regarding their working conditions and because of their exclusion from any social benefit and security. In the informal sector, workers usually find themselves engaged in poor-quality, unproductive and unremunerative jobs. A good percentage of these jobs are not recognized or protected by law. This is in addition to the absence of rights at work, inadequate social protection, and the lack of representation in terms of formidable unions.

Furthermore, labour rights, especially the right to form unions and engage in collective bargaining appears nonexistent in the informal sector. Pay levels are also very low in the informal sector while the amount and regularity of hours and days of work remains high. The implication of these is that the concept of decent work as developed by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in 1999 which describe opportunities for men and women to obtain decent and productive work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity has not been attained in the informal sector in Nigeria.

Challenges Confronting the Informal Sector in Nigeria as a Result of Decent Work Deficits

From the foregoing, it has been established that “Nigeria has an economic system which suffers from a plethora of deficiencies. Prominent among these deficiencies is the relegation of human capital to a secondary role in the production process” (Iheriohanma and Ukachukwu, 2009:49). This is worse in the informal sector as opportunities for skills and knowledge development are almost non-existent or are at best, barely minimal. The outcome is seen in the quality of goods and services the informal sector provides to clients and customers. In addition, Boateng et al (2013) identified inappropriate education and training policies, and limited availability of enabling environment for investment as part of the decent work deficits challenging the informal sector. While the former results in low skill supply and skills mismatch, the latter is related to limited participation in exports as affected by low investments due to administrative barriers, lack of access to factors of production and poor infrastructure.

The informal sector is also encumbered by its limited access to improving the technical and managerial skills available to it. Equally, the “lack of proper social and market knowledge is also often an inhibiting factor... because they often teach themselves how to do their jobs, or they learn from someone else who is unqualified” (Companion, 2010: 87). The little skill they possess is usually within the sector and it is mainly acquired through apprenticeship to other barely qualified trainers. The benefits of vocational or professional training are usually beyond their pecuniary abilities. The drive behind the establishment of trade unions and cooperative societies is yet to become a way of work life in the informal sector. Workers in the informal sector in Nigeria appear oblivious to the need, functions and uses of trade union membership. Where such is found, “there seems to be a missing link because most informal sector workers understanding in this direction is far from the actual. They miss the mark of claiming ownership of their unions or cooperatives by sitting back, placing their deplorable conditions at the doorsteps of these associations” (ILO, 2002). This misunderstanding sets in motion the hesitation of most informal workers to be part of unions and cooperatives. As an outcome, informal work and poverty continues to spread both in the cities and urban areas of Nigeria (Amaghionyeodiwe, 2009).

Canagarajah and Sethuraman (2001: 14) further summarised the challenges confronting the informal sector in Nigeria as a result of decent work deficits in their assertion that “informality compounded by market imperfection, renders [the informal workers] less viable and more vulnerable. Their ability to compete in the

market is diminished, especially against some products and services of the formal sector, which tends to enjoy favoured treatment in the policy framework". As a result, workers in the informal sector in Nigeria find it difficult to minimise their cost in terms of production and it becomes difficult for them to diversify their output. Their access to incentives to accumulate capital, acquire skills, and improve technology remains few and wide. Pleas for government intervention and investment in critical infrastructure, decent work place, basic shelter, portable water and storage facilities to provide conducive working environment for the informal sector falls on deaf ears and informal workers remain bereft of workers' rights and benefits found in the formal sector.

In addition, it could be said that opportunities for decent, productive work in the informal sector in Nigeria are further constrained by poor infrastructures in terms of poor electricity, roads, water and communication and security. There is also the existence of institutional issues which include informal training and schooling, little access to affordable credit facilities, undeveloped human capacities, inadequate manpower planning, dwindling opportunities in terms of the market share of mostly low quality services and goods, outdated skills and equipments, non-existence of social security schemes, etc. The above is compounded by limited access to up to date technology, low income, poor start-up capital, exploitation and poor work environment, incessant harassment by government officials, illegal excessive taxation and extortion by regulatory authorities, poor access to occupational health and safety facilities and training, etc.

Subjected to such unfavourable work situation, workers in the informal sector of the Nigerian economy perceive they are treated unequally in comparison with those who are employed in the formal sector like the civil or public service. They remain largely unmotivated and feel dissatisfied because they know that their counterparts in the formal sector are treated much better than they are.

Recommendations

The informal sector employs a large number of the working population in Nigeria. It has become a viable means of livelihood to homes and families who for various reasons were not able to obtain employment in the formal sector. Therefore, in an environment characterised by global economic competition, achieving decent work for informal workers should not be regarded as a complicated and challenging task but as an incentive to reducing unemployment. To exploit the employment and income potentials of the informal sector of national economy, the following are recommended:

- It is a reality that the informal sector is growing in this country especially in the urban centres, and the issue of Labour relations and workers safety in the sector can no longer be ignored.
- Urgent incorporation of the need for decent work and employment as one of the objectives of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to engender increased productive employment.
- Promotion of employment and social protection rights at work to enable the empowerment of workers in the informal sector.
- Employment should be formally recognized. Workers in the informal sector should have contracts, fixed hours and employment benefits as is obtained in the formal sector.
- Provision of critical infrastructure, especially decent work spaces with sanitation, basic shelter against the elements, potable water and toilet as well as storage facilities to ensure adequate working environment for informal workers.

- More effort should be made to ensure wholesome application of the Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP), orchestrated by ILO, to liberate workers in the informal sector in Nigerian from unwholesome trade and unfair labour practices

Conclusion

In view of the unemployment situation in Nigeria, the informal sector is positioned to generate further employment. This is because the informal sector could be alluded to as the backbone of the Nigerian economy. It is the backbone because it has kept things running for Nigerians who have had to survive decades of dwindling economic fortunes, unfriendly policies and gruesome neglect of the increasing unemployment in the formal sector. Unfortunately, going by the Decent Work Agenda developed by the ILO (1999), employment in the informal sector in Nigeria is still characterized by non-standardized hours of work, lack of binding contractual relationship if any, etc. Moreover, it is found that an average worker in the informal sector suffers from a significant degree of under-employment. The result is a differential in the average earnings between the formal and informal sector.

Therefore, since this study has analytically highlighted the challenges associated with achieving decent work as conceptualised by the International Labour Organisation, in the informal sector of a developing country like Nigeria, it therefore concludes that the informal sector has experienced the worst circumstances of historic and institutional neglect in the country. Yet, this sector continues to flourish in the best traditions of entrepreneurial spirit despite tremendous local and global pressures. Despite the tremendous inequity recorded in the informal sector, Nigeria's long-term macro-economic performance is critically tied to its management of this sector, which can eventually prove much more valuable than its rich reserves of oil.

Bringing basic skills training programmes to workers in the informal sector will help to bring down poverty and unemployment levels and improve the country's economic growth. Further development of relevant skills and knowledge will lead to improved working conditions and increased productivity. These will contribute to the promotion of decent work in the informal economy (NISER, 2009). A better less work-intensive and safer technologies can raise the productivity and income, reduce work drudgery and occupational risks to health and safety, and improve products. New skills and knowledge can open doors to more economically and socially rewarding jobs (Marjo-Riitta, 2003). Hence, since the informal sector is capable of creating more jobs and growing faster than the formal sector, greater effort should be made in increasing capital, technology and decent work incentives available to the sector.

Future Research

The following, arising from this study, are recommended for future research.

- i. Women and Challenges of Working in the Informal Sector.
- ii. Quality of Work Life and Work Life Balance: The Prospects of Workers in the Informal Sector in Nigeria.
- iii. An Analysis of the Income and Employment Enhancing Potentials of the Informal Sector of the Nigerian Economy.

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