



Youth Unemployment and Political Instability in Côte D'ivoire

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Abstract

The objective of this study is to analyze the nexus between youth unemployment and political instability in Côte d'Ivoire. To achieve this objective, we used a regional approach to conduct analysis on the relationship between political instability and youth unemployment in Côte d'Ivoire and we developed a method for calculating the political instability indicator. Analytical, descriptive, and econometric methods were used to analyze data from surveys conducted in relation to households' living standards levels as well as surveys on employment. The results indicate that, by considering persons aged from 15 to 24 years as young people only, one might underestimate youth unemployment and the impact of policies aimed at

combating youth unemployment. The statistics also revealed a very high level of youth unemployment. The econometric estimation results equally showed a positive and significant relationship between youth unemployment and political instability.

Keywords: *Youth unemployment, political instability*

Introduction

Youth unemployment and political instability are two major challenges facing African countries. Globally, 12.6% of young people were unemployed in 2012. In sub-Saharan Africa¹, the rate of unemployment was at 11.9%. According to 2012 and 2013 employment survey results, the government of Côte d'Ivoire argued that if we consider persons paid below the minimum wage and under-employment, the unemployment rate in Côte d'Ivoire was at 26.5% in 2012. This unemployment rate rose to 25% in 2013. These rates may underestimate the extent of youth unemployment. Every year, thousands of young graduates leave Ivorian universities and colleges without being able to find an internship or their first job. Some of these young people are sitting on the roadsides engaged in small businesses in search of the bare minimum to survive. According to Kouakou (2011), 80% of the unemployed people in Côte d'Ivoire are between 25 and 34 years old with 29% of them being inactive. This high youth unemployment rate and growing poverty among population puts the country at high risk of political and social upheavals.

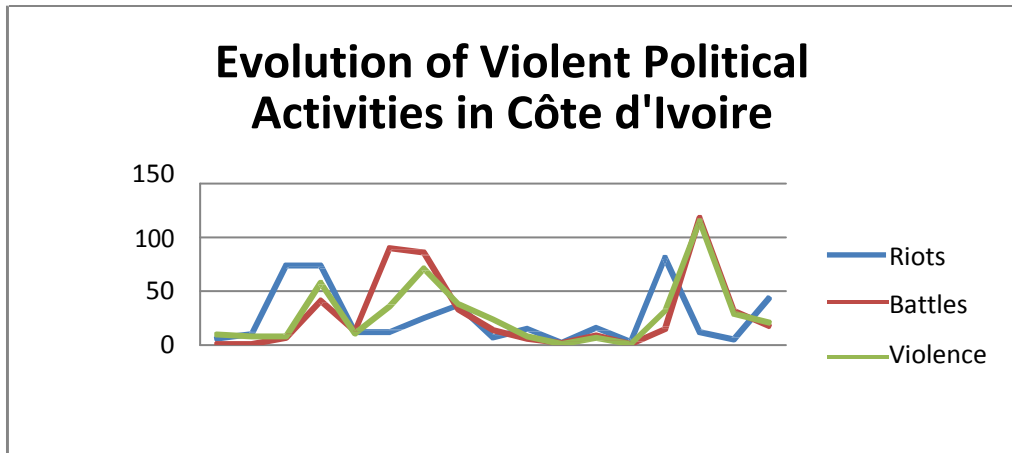
Since their independence, each country of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has at one time or another been faced with coups d'état or armed conflicts². There have been at least 58 coups and attempted coups in these countries (World development report, 2011). Since independence in 1960 until the advent of democracy in 1990, Côte d'Ivoire was cited as an example of a stable country at a time when there were repeated coups d'état in some neighboring countries. But from 1990 onwards the country was faced with political turmoil which led to the first coup d'état in 1999. After this coup d'état, the country went through ten years of crisis. Graph 1 shows the evolution of riots, armed battles between the government and the rebellions, and violence against the civilian population in Côte d'Ivoire from 1997 to 2013. We can see that violent political activity in Côte d'Ivoire has recorded three peaks over the period. The first peak was around 1999 and 2000. This period coincided with the first coup d'état in December 1999 and the attempted coups d'état in 2000. The second peak occurred around the years 2002 and 2003. This second peak was a result of the failed coup d'état of September 2002 and subsequent onset of political and military crisis. From 2005 to 2009 there was a significant decrease in violent activities due to

1 ILO's Key Indicators of the Labour Market (KILM) data 8th edition

2 <http://www.ucdp.uu.se/gpdatabase/search.php> viewed on 19/06/2014

the signing of the peace agreements and the formation of a government of national union. The third peak was between 2010 and 2011. This period was a result of the violent political unrest that followed the presidential elections.

Graph 1: Evolution of the number of violent political activities in Côte d'Ivoire:



Source: Author's calculation based on ACLED³ data

During crises, young people are either victims or actors in these crises. A significant proportion of young people who are active in these crises are often unemployed. This leads us to question whether unemployed young people are at the heart of the crises or whether they are victims of various crises. The problem of unemployment has become a threat to social, economic, and political stability for many developing countries (Urdal, 2012; Nwokwu, 2013). Indeed, unemployed youth could be manipulated to disrupt the stability of democracy at any time (Nwokwu, 2013). Moreover, the high unemployment rate of young people exposes them to abuse by politicians who use them for anti-social and clandestine political activities. According to the ILO, a young person is defined as a person between the ages of 15 and 24. Whereas the African Youth Charter defines youth as anyone between the ages of 25 and 35. This definition of the African charter takes into account African realities.

Taylor and Hudson (1972) and Gupta (1990) identified three forms of political instability. There is elite or executive instability (coups d'état, changes, and crises in government), mass instability (social movements: strikes, demonstrations, or riots) and armed or violent instability (civil wars, guerrilla war, violent political actions). For Fosu (1992), political instability is the change of political power through violence and changes in accordance with legal structures. As for Alesina and al (1996), they define political instability as the propensity for a collapse of government by constitutional or unconstitutional means. Political instability is a complex and multidimensional

3 Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED)

concept. It may not have the same meaning in all countries. As Côte d'Ivoire emerges from ten years of crises and given the major role played by young people during these crises, it is important to investigate whether youth unemployment is a factor contributing to political instability in Côte d'Ivoire. The objective of this study is to analyze the correlation between youth unemployment and political instability in Côte d'Ivoire. To achieve this objective, we try to answer the following question during this study: *What is the relationship between youth unemployment and political instability in Côte d'Ivoire?*

The purpose of this study is to situate youth unemployment at the heart of the analysis about political stability in Côte d'Ivoire. Analysis of potential factors influencing stability is essential for the maintenance of peace and prosperity in a country that has just gone through a protracted period of crisis. One of the interesting contributions of this study is the adoption of a regional approach to conduct the analysis concerning the nexus between political instability and youth unemployment in Côte d'Ivoire. Indeed, the relationship between these two variables may vary from one region to another, whereas most studies address the relationship between these two variables from a national perspective.

Analysis of political crises in Côte d'Ivoire

Since independence in 1960 to the advent of democracy in 1990, Côte d'Ivoire was cited as an example of a stable country. The first president Félix Houphouët-Boigny managed to maintain political stability in the country until his death in 1993 despite tensions between natives and non-natives in the western regions of the country due to land scarcity (Beauchemin 1999). But after his death, his successor Henry Konan Bédié introduced the identity dimension into politics to push aside some of his rivals such as Alassane Ouattara from the northern part of the country. People from the north of the country felt marginalized and there was a lot of tension in the country. These tensions led to political unrest that culminated in the first coup d'état in 1999. After this coup d'état, Côte d'Ivoire went through more than ten years of military and political crisis which ended in 2011 with the post-election violence which caused almost 3000 deaths. Table 1 shows the changes of regime and ministerial reshuffles from 1999 onwards. Changes of regime or ministerial reshuffles have not always been in line with Côte d'Ivoire's usual political cycle.

Table 1: Regime change and Ministerial reshuffles in Côte d'Ivoire since 1999:

Dates	Cabinet reshuffle and regime change	Major events leading to instability	Actors in conflict
24 December 1999	Coup d'état by General Guéi Robert	A rebel of soldiers turns into a coup. Rebels led by General Guéi Robert overthrew the regime of President Henry Konan Bédié.	The rebels led by General Guéi Robert and the President Henry Konan Bédié's regime (PDCI-RDA)
22 October 2000	Election of Laurent Gbagbo as President of the Republic	Interior ministry announces victory for General Gueï Robert and Laurent Gbagbo declares himself "head of state" and calls on his followers to take to the streets	Laurent Gbagbo's party (FPI) and General Guéi Robert's camp.
5 August 2002	Formation of a government of national union with all the major political parties in the country.	Establishment of a "forum for national reconciliation", aimed at putting to an end the tensions.	All major political parties in the country.
19 September 2002	Attempted coup that transformed itself into a rebellion.	Soldiers exiled in neighboring countries launch attacks on various military camps and try to overthrow the regime in power. They fail and take control of Bouaké (central north) and Korhogo (north).	President Laurent Gbagbo's regime and the insurgency (MPCI)
26 January 2003	Appointment of Seydou Diarra as Prime Minister by consensus	Signing of the Marcoussis Agreement and violent protests in Abidjan	All major political parties in the country and the rebellion (Forces Nouvelles).
4 December 2005	Appointment of Charles Konan Banny as Prime Minister by consensus and formation of a transition government	Signing of the Pretoria Agreement	All major political parties in the country and the rebellion (Forces Nouvelles).
September 2006	Second government of Charles Konan Banny	Toxic waste disposal.	President Gbagbo and Prime Minister Charles Konan Banny.
4 April 2007	Appointment of Soro Guillaume, the leader of the rebellion, as Prime Minister.	Signing of the Ouagadougou Agreement.	President Laurent Gbagbo's camp and the rebellion (Forces Nouvelles)
28 November 2010	Second round of the presidential election: Alassane Ouattara and Laurent Gbagbo both declared as winners.	Post-electoral crisis leading to the arrest of Laurent Gbagbo and the subsequent assumption of power by Alassane Ouattara.	The pro-Gbagbo and pro- Ouattara

Source: From the author

The failed coup in 2002, which turned into a rebellion, caused the country to split in two. The presidential camp stationed in Abidjan controlled 40% of the national territory and the rebellion operating from Bouaké controlled the remaining 60%. Young people played an important role in this crisis. The presidential camp was supported by the "young patriots" who, through peaceful and violent actions, helped to keep the regime in power until 2011. The rebellion also used young people to expand its military strength.

Both sides made promises to recruit young people. Faced with offers from both sides, many unemployed youths had three choices. These were a rebel choice, a choice for legality and a choice for neutrality. Youths who preferred rebellion joined the rebellion camp and youths who opted for legality joined the presidential camp. Some youths who preferred neutrality were coerced through threats to their families or to themselves to join one of the two camps. They were also forced to join one of the two camps because neutrals were considered by both camps as spies for the other camp. This pressure led some young people to join either side. As a reward, the presidential camp recruited 3,000 young people from its camp called "young recruits" into the regular army and offered incentives to its soldiers. By recruiting these young people, the presidential camp gave employment to these mostly unemployed youths. During the signing of an agreement between the two parties, 5,000 rebel soldiers joined the regular army. The rebel leaders had promised sums of money to the young recruits in their ranks and their integration into the regular army.

Methodology

In this study, we use both descriptive and econometric analysis to conduct the empirical analysis. Data from national surveys and international institutions were used extensively to support this analysis. The empirical analysis will be done in two stages. In the first stage we will perform a statistical analysis and in the second stage we will provide an econometric estimation. Following Hoeffler's (2008) analysis method, we adopt an analytical and descriptive approach. Through graphs and calculation of ratios, we will analyze the relationship between youth unemployment and political instability in Côte d'Ivoire. We also use this method to show the particularity of each region in Côte d'Ivoire.

An econometric model can be used to analyze the relationship between political instability and youth unemployment in Côte d'Ivoire. Building on the works of Mbaku and Paul (1989) and Aisen and Veiga (2006), we apply a panel model to analyze the relationship between youth unemployment and political instability in Côte d'Ivoire. We have identified 11 regions of the country that will be used to constitute the individuals in the panel (the central region, the central-eastern region, the central-northern region, the central-western region, the northern region, the north-eastern

region, the north-western region, the western region, the southern region, the south-western region and the city of Abidjan).

Conclusion and recommendations

Analyzing the relationship between youth unemployment and political instability is essential for Côte d'Ivoire, which has just gone through ten years of politico-military crisis. Young Ivoirians are active in politics. The objective of this study is to analyze the link between youth unemployment and political instability. During this study, we conducted a descriptive and econometric analysis. The distinction between youth aged 15-24 and youth aged 25-35 revealed that by considering only those aged 15-24 as youth, the level of youth unemployment and the impact of policies to combat youth unemployment could be underestimated. The concept of unemployment as defined by the International Labour Organization (ILO) does not make it possible to ascertain the whole situation regarding unemployment in Africa in general and in Côte d'Ivoire in particular. Statistics have revealed non-employment rates of more than 50% in some regions, while youth unemployment rates according to the ILO definition are less than 5% in these regions.

The choice of the regional approach in this analysis prompted us to develop a method for calculating the political instability indicator. This study found that there is a link between youth unemployment and political instability in Côte d'Ivoire. Almost all regions of Côte d'Ivoire that had a high level of contribution to political instability also had high youth unemployment rates. Results of econometric estimations showed a positive and significant relationship between political instability and youth unemployment for both (15-24) and (25-35) year old's. Similar results were obtained when we used youth non-employment as an alternative measure of youth unemployment. The high level of political instability is an explanatory factor for youth unemployment in Côte d'Ivoire. In addition, there is a positive relationship between youth unemployment and primary and secondary school enrolment rates. On the other hand, there is a negative relationship between youth unemployment and non-enrolment and tertiary enrolment rates.

Combating political instability to reduce youth unemployment

Political instability in recent years has led to the closure of businesses and the subsequent loss of jobs. Persistent political crises hamper new investment and job creation for young university graduates. Creating a stable political environment reassures investors who will invest more and create jobs. Regional analysis on the relationship between youth unemployment and political instability has shown that Abidjan and the Central-North regions have been identified as areas where there

have been more violent political activities and high levels of youth unemployment. It is therefore important to address regional disparities and marginalization to avoid certain regions becoming breeding grounds for disruptive activities. Specific actions are required in these regions to mitigate the potential risks of political instability if youth unemployment is to be tackled in a sustainable manner. The positive relationship between youth unemployment and primary and secondary school enrolment rates implies that general education curricula should be revised to provide more employment opportunities for those who cannot access higher education.

Redefining unemployment

The wide gap between the youth unemployment rate and the non-employment of young people in Côte d'Ivoire should prompt the Ivorian authorities to re-examine the definition of unemployment. Although the universally accepted definition of youth unemployment allows for easier comparison between countries, African states in general and Côte d'Ivoire must consider the prevailing situation in their respective countries for a better definition of unemployment. They must consider the non-employment of young people while formulating their policy with a view to combating youth unemployment.

Collection and storage of good quality data on youth unemployment

One of the main challenges in conducting studies on youth unemployment in Africa in general and in Côte d'Ivoire is the lack of data. Lack of data made it impossible for us to conduct econometric analysis over a long period of time. Therefore, it is important to reflect on how to regularly collect and store good quality data on youth unemployment so that studies can be conducted, and appropriate policies developed to combat youth unemployment in Côte d'Ivoire.

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