

YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT AND RESTIVENESS: THE NIGERIAN STORY

OBIAJULU OFODILE A.
FEDERAL POLYTECHNIC, OKO
Email: aobiajuluofodile@gmail.com
PHONE NUMBER: +2347037219044

&

AGBO, RACHEL NGOZI.
FEDERAL POLYTECHNIC, OKO
Email: agborn15@gmail.com
PHONE NUMBER: +2348036534117, +2347034904108

Abstract

Youth restiveness has become a topical issue for discussion in the social, economic and polity domain in Nigeria. It is a fact that Nigeria cannot thrive and progress significantly with youths who are restive. Nigeria's peace, security and corporate existence as a nation is threatened because of the prevalence of this phenomenon. The causes of youth restiveness are connected to unemployment, lack of basic and inadequate infrastructural facilities and inadequate social amenities amongst others. The spiralling effect of youth restiveness are evident in Nigeria as ethnic militia, kidnapping, cultism, armed robbery, agitations and involvement in social insecurity. The causes and effects of youth restiveness have promoted uncertainties which have led to failure, fear and underdevelopment of most sectors in the Nigeria. The conflict theory explains that threatening events such as wars, revolution, domestic violence and others are as a result of competition and limited resources. Unfortunately, Nigeria's government has not done enough by providing basic facilities, employment opportunities and effective empowerment programmes for the youths to be gainfully employed. This study holds unto the premise that in order to control youths in Nigeria, their skills, talents and education must be recognized, encouraged and channelled to the right sector in the society for growth, sustainable development and national peace. This paper reviewed the arguments surrounding youth restiveness in Nigeria alongside some recommendations on how the government could effectively be organized and responsible to counter the growing rate of youth restiveness in Nigeria.

Keywords: Control, Youth, Peace, Unemployment

Introduction

The issue of unemployment has become a serious source of worry in the country's economy especially during this period of global economic crunch. This is not only peculiar to advanced economies like England, France, United States of America, Germany etc but also to Togo, Benin and Ethiopia etc.

Jhingan (2008) suggests that unemployment is one of the most sensitive and disturbing problem fighting against the development of the contemporary Nigerian society. However, from the foregoing, it is clear that no country is free from the problem of unemployment and that explains why the pace of youth restiveness is very high in the country.

Unemployment has become chronic and intractable and it is the brain behind youth restiveness in State. This is because of a common saying that "an idle man is the devils workshop". The acquisition of a certificate or degree was considered a sure passport to a paid employment either in the private or public sectors of the economy. Gloomy labour market situation has now been the case as young school leavers and university

graduates that were expected to get it easy (employment) are stranded and taken to crime in Nigeria. Youths have taken to crime as a means of getting their own share of the National cake, giving rise to chrome cases of youth restiveness in virtually the entire country.

Egunjobi (2007), many social problems such as prostitution, robbery, alcoholism, domestic violence, kidnapping, raping, drug addiction, social, religious and civil unrest and suicide to mention but few, become more severe in times of high unemployment. There is a connecting line between crime and unemployment, this is why most people tend to be criminal minded especially when no legal or legitimate work to do; they turn to doing the available. Once the height of this menace is not checked crime and its likes becomes the order of the day (Alanana, 2003; Oni 2007). Insecurity in Nigeria recently is like a wild fire threatening its very existence. Incidence like armed robbery, prostitution, bomb blasts, assassinations, kidnapping, banditry, killer herdsmen, religious crises and other criminal acts is a gradually becoming a norm in our once peaceful country. These acts are carried out by no other persons than the youth who are considered to reign as future leaders. Okafor (2011); Alabi & Alana (2012) contented that Nigerian youths face the consequences of idleness due to bad governance from our leaders, lack of basic amenities, frustration and hopelessness. A major nightmare of the youth in Nigeria recently has remained unemployment.

Theoretical Framework

The problems of inequitable distribution of national resources, marginalization, poverty and unemployment have fostered the youths' dive into restiveness thereby creating instability in the society system.

Two theories were adopted in this study to proffer an explanation for youth restiveness. The theories are conflict and strain theory.

Crossman, (2019) noted that: Conflict Theory states that tension and conflict arise when resource, states and power are unevenly distributed between groups in society and that this conflict becomes the engine for social change. In this context, power can be understood as control of material resources and accumulated wealth, control of politics and institutions that make up society, and one's social status relative to others (determined not by class but by race, gender, sexuality, culture and religion among other things".

The classic strain theory focuses on deprive youth. The inability for youths to accomplish set goals forces them into crime (Britannica, 2019). Merton (1930) stated that pressures derived from social factors such as lack of income or lack of quality education drives individuals to commit crimes. Crossman also avers that: Strain Theory explains deviant behaviour as an inevitable outcome or the strain individual experience when society does not provide adequate and approved means of achieving culturally valued goals. For example, when a society places cultural value on economic success and wealth, but only provides legally sanctioned means for a small portion of the population to achieve this goals, those excluded may turn to unconventional or criminal means of attaining them (Crossman, 2019).

In respect to the above, government should treat all fairly. Segregation, deprivation, misappropriation and embezzlement of funds should be curbed to avoid criminality and underdevelopment in societies. Basically, economic, political, education, social, medical and technological needs of the masses are inevitable to enhance development and growth in societies.

The Causes of Youth Restiveness

The causes of youth restiveness are numerous. It is disturbing that most youths do not want to take up responsibilities anymore. They always look for the easy way out which is usually unlawful and unprofitable. In the past, most youths were seen to be involved in farm work, trading, helping out in house chores and other decent task.

Today, youths see themselves as high and above such responsibilities, even when they do not have the required criteria for a white-collar job, they insist on being employed by industries located in the communities. Nowadays, it is difficult to find trust worthy honest, decent, responsible and hardworking

youth who is focused and have their priorities right. Youths seem to see responsibility as too tasking and diminishing. Thereby, they refuse to execute such task with or without pay depending on the situation. Sometimes, they demand for unreasonable payment for the job they want to do. The values of the society have been misplaced. The problem of incapability of performing task effectively or shying away from work could be as a result of improper home training, lack of discipline, defiance, laziness and lack of self-confidence. Ofem and Ajayi (2008) have stated that “lack of humanitarian and social welfare, lack of good governance, corrupt practices of government officials, inadequate training programmes, unemployment, inadequate recreational facilities and lack of quality education amongst others the reasons for incessant youth restiveness”. The relentless youth restiveness in Nigeria can be attributed to the following:

Poor Governmental Policies

When a government policy is not favourable to a people, it tends to breed opposition from the masses because they feel oppressed and neglected. There is need for the government to study her masses and find out their pressing needs and ensure that it is meant. According to Oromaregbe et al (2013), “the escalating state of violence between the Niger Delta youth and the Nigeria Government is that of the politics of access to the oil fund” In the developed world like the United States of America, an adult of 18 years and above is given accommodation and allowances when he/she does not have a job. A similar act should be passed in Nigeria. This will reduce the youth restiveness as they will have means to take care of themselves until they have something meaningful to do. When appropriate laws are not made, there cannot be growth and development in the country. A bad policy divides the nation, breeds youth restiveness, increases criminality, destroys societal and government structures. There is need for government in preparing a country’s budget to equitably distribute her natural resources to avoid chaos.

Bad government policies are associated with bad governance.

Bad governance infringes on the masses’ fundamental human rights, promotes corruption, is not accountable to the masses, it is an irresponsible government and lacks proper transparency. In the tenure of a bad government, there is usually increase in crime rate, no freedom of speech, centralization of government is practiced, misappropriation of funds and mismanagement of resources amongst others. These attributes lead not only to the dissatisfaction of the youths but the masses in general.

Lack of Job Opportunity

In Nigeria today, the growing rate of unemployment is alarming. According to Onuba (2019), “the labour statistics report released by the National Bureau of Statistics showed that the number of Nigerians unemployed rose from 11.92 million in the first quarter of 2017 to 13.58 million and 15.99 million in the second and third quarters respectively”. Ozohu-Suleiman (2006) observed that “Nigerian youth are trapped by unemployment.” Most Nigerians are depending solely on either the government or oil companies for employment. Nigerians are failing in using their initiatives, skills resources and knowledge to start businesses and create job opportunities for the masses. The youths are also not taking the empowerment programmes seriously so that they can be self-employed. The dependency rate on government and few oil companies is raising a lot of agitations which is detrimental to the wellbeing of the nation.

Zakaria (2006) strongly believes that the absence of job opportunities in developing countries is responsible for youth restiveness with disastrous consequences. Government has not put in enough functional structure in place to provide jobs for the masses. There is the need for government to be involved in home made goods and ensuring that there are local industries around the countries where youths can be employed while revenues will also be generated for the country. This will help engage the youths and curb idleness that would have ordinarily led to evil vices.

The inability of the youths to have or create jobs makes them to be vulnerable to unreasonable politicians, religious fanatics and greedy individuals. They are used to carry unlawful activities with a stipend reward. Zakaria (2006) believes that “the rising tide of unemployment and the fear of a bleak future among the youth in African countries have made them vulnerable to the manipulations of agents provocateurs”.

Poor Standard of Living

Poor standard of living contributes to youth restiveness. There is a common Nigeria proverb which states that “a hungry man is an angry man”. When people cannot meet their basic needs of food, clothing and shelter, they are regarded as poor. Poverty is a poor standard of living condition. Aworawo (2000) agreed that there is a connection between poverty, unemployment, discrimination, and youth restiveness in relation to violence by youth towards the Nigeria government. The gap between the rich and the poor is usually large. The poor feels dejected, oppressed, dehumanized and segregated. Most youths, rather than partake in responsible jobs to get funds, they look for avenues to make quick monies. These make the youth to be involved in criminal activities that will bring funds to them and their families, no matter the consequences. Today, the cases of internet fraudsters (yahoo boys), deceitful activities (419), kidnapping and ritual activities are on the increase. All these lead to insecurity in the state.

Inadequate Educational System

Education plays a vital role in the growth, development and stability of a country. The basic knowledge for human development educationally and socially is acquired in an educational environment. The problem with the Nigeria educational system today is that they lack infrastructural facilities, lack equipment, lack quality teachers and do not follow the scheme of work especially in the rural areas.

Most youths in the rural areas do not go to school because they cannot meet the financial obligation to attain educational qualifications; some affect those in the urban areas. This will not help the country. In government schools in Nigeria, payments are still made. Government should encourage all to attend school by ensuring that there is free Education at the primary and secondary levels. At the University level, the fees should be greatly reduced. The irony of these is that those that graduate still find it difficult to get jobs. This further encompasses the problems of their families and the youth. The government and the masses must work as one to ensure that investments in education are promoted in the country to curb this menace. Osalor (2012), stated that, “Quality education has a direct bearing on national prestige, greatness, and cohesion. The knowledge and skill that young people acquire help determine their degree of patriotism and contribution to national integration and progress”. Population reference Bureau, 2006 stated that “Between 2000 and 2004, about 30 percent of Nigerian youth between 10 and 24 were not enrolled in secondary school (National Bureau of Statistics, 2006). “This could be as a result of unreasonable cost in acquiring Education. This situation is not healthy for Nigerians.

Poor Infrastructural Facilities

In general, Nigeria has poor infrastructural facilities. These lack of facilities occurred as a result of unequal distribution of the national resources, misappropriation of funds and mismanagement of funds. Nigerians lack educational facilities, clean water, roads, electricity, and medical facilities amongst others. The strive to get these facilities in place can also lead to youth restiveness.

Lack of Information

Information is vital in taking crucial and important decision. Wrong information can be very detrimental to decision making process as it will mislead all to making wrong decision. Therefore, part of the cause of the youth restiveness in the society is as a result of wrong information delivered to the youth. These will make them to be aggressive and partake in violent protest as the case may be. The studies of Ifidon and Ahiauzu (2005) in Niger Delta revealed that lack of communication and insufficient information flow can lead to youth restiveness. Therefore, leaders and members of the public should be careful with the type of information they share as information can build and also destroy. People should interact to share information. Lack of communication, inadequate and wrong information can lead to emergence of youth restiveness.

The Effects of Youth Restiveness

Youth restiveness is a problem to communities and the country at large. The way and manner through which youth try to achieve their goals by agitation have reduced societal progress and cripple productive level in

the society. In the course of struggling to protect their interest through the use of youth restiveness, they create more problems for themselves. These acts push them to commit crimes that they could be apprehended for, thereby worsening their situations.

The effects of youth restiveness are:

Increasing Crime

According to Schaefer (2005), crime is a violation of criminal law for which some governmental authority applies formal penalties. Laws divide crimes into various categories. Depending on the severity of the offense, the age of the offender, the potential punishment, and the court that holds jurisdiction over the case. Crime is dangerous to all aspect of society; be it political, social, economic, religious or educational. Crime prevents good relationships between countries, it leads to destruction of lives and properties, it dampens the spirit of both local and foreign investors to invest in the country, and this increases insecurity and leads to underdevelopment. Increased criminal activities have occurred from youth restiveness. The desire for youths to have better lives without having meaningful skills and educational knowledge to meet up has pushed them into criminality. Crime is a risk to societal safety.

Unsecured Environment

The illegal activities of the youths are as a result of uncertainty or anxiety. They lose self confidence in themselves. In the Niger-Delta, everyone seems to be cautious of their environment because of fear of being kidnapped, and also to escape from any violence that may likely arise. According to Oromareghake et al (2013), the oil boom has increase violence in the Niger delta, which in 2006 resulted in the reduction of Nigeria's oil export by 25%. The general insecurity caused by the activities of the restive youths and the security agencies costs the country treasury billions of naira each year. It should also be noted that in order to control unrest and boost production, the government has adopted strategies ranging from direct negotiation with the Militants to all-out Military assaults on them. However, these methods have not been successful". The youth are not relenting in the vandalization of pipelines. Oromareghake et al (2013) stated that "securing the pipelines and other oil and gas assets in the country has become a heavy burden to the government". Until date, the government still spends a lot on security to protect the country's natural resources from youth restiveness, bunkering and smugglers activities. The problem of insecurity has driven away both foreign and local investors thereby increasing unemployment rate. This in turn, will encourage youths to partake in illegal activities thereby creating problems for the society.

Poor Financial State

Pettinger (2017) stated that "a low rate of economic growth can cause higher unemployment". When there is inflation, mismanagement of funds and misappropriate of funds in a country, there is bound to be financial crisis. When there is no proper circulation of funds in the society, there will be reduction in the demand for goods by the masses and industries will require few services. This will have adverse effect on the youths. If a country experiences decline in her finances, some industries will be shut down, thereby making many workers to become jobless.

Increased Underemployment

The unemployment rate in Nigeria is increasing rather than decreasing. This is affecting the youths tremendously that they are willingly to partake in plans that are detrimental to themselves and the society. Kazeem (2017) stated that, National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) (2016) pegs the unemployment rate at 14.2% in the last quarter of 2016, up from 13.9% in the preceding quarter. It's the ninth consecutive quarter that the unemployment rate has increase. Employment has faltered as businesses struggled amid Nigeria's first recession in two deceases. These companies' dependent on foreign transactions are also suffering due to a critical shortage of dollars. In May 2016, nearly a millionpeople applied for ten thousand (10,000) listed positions in the Nigerian police force. Also in November 2016, the Federal Tax agency received 700,000 applications for 500 advertised positions. Majority of Nigerian youths within the median age of 21 are most

affected. Fraudulent schemes have strived with millions looking to make quick buck in the absence of gainful employment”.

Rebellious Communal Behaviour

Rebellious communal behaviour by the youth is caused by incessant demands for their interest to be met. The Advocates for the advancement of Youth Development Initiatives (AAYDI) (2012), have stated that the activities of youth restiveness have affected the country negatively through low production of goods and services through disorder, by disrupting law and order in the society, e.g. militancy. Increased crime rates, increase in intra-ethnic and religious conflict, disturbing investors and other numerous criminal tendencies. The problems associated with rebellious communal behaviour are marginalization, unemployment, exuberance, poverty and poor educational opportunities.

Youth restiveness has led to destruction of oneself because when they are caught by the Government law agencies, the punishment could be devastating. They could be sentenced to life imprisonment, they could be sentenced to death, it may lead to their imprisonment, and such activities can also lead to fight among the youth causing disability amongst others. The restiveness of youth affects social and economic activities negatively thereby leading to hardship. Vandalization of pipelines by youth affects societies negatively, especially it destroys vegetation. The spillage on the community’s river destroys their water and fishes. Youth restiveness has led to loss of lives and poverty people now live in fear as a result of youth insurgence.

Conclusion

No nation can achieve growth or any form of stability that will boost socio-economic advancement in a heaven of chronic youth unemployment. They say that the idle mind is the devil’s workshop, hence, most of the crimes committed in Nigeria today is been perpetrated by youths between the ages of 20-40 years because they are not gainfully employed or gainfully engaged in one vocation or the other. The objective of administration is the provision

of basic infrastructures that will enable the youths of this nation be employed or learn a skill/vocation. Once, these age bracket of youths are busy with one legitimate vocation or the other, crime will automatically leave the streets and villages of Nigeria.

Recommendations

The study has analyzed the causes and effects of youth restiveness. Therefore, for peace, meaningful progress and development to be achieved, the following recommendations are required to curb youth restiveness:

Government should create job opportunities for its citizens. In Nigeria, there is the need for government and citizens to engage in local productions of goods. This will lead to building of industries and attracting manpower. Effective and meaningful empowerment programmes should also be adopted in the state so that those that could not be employed by government, private and nongovernmental organizations can be self-employed. This attainment of free qualitative education in Nigeria will help improve the reasoning capacities of her citizens. In essence, there will be proper dissemination of information that will promote peace or ensure a state of tranquillity. The government of countries, Nigeria in particular should make favourable policies in the distribution of national resources. This will help eradicate marginalization, oppression, neglect and underdevelopment.

Policies to prevent religious, political and ethnic crisis should be made and adhered to strictly. Generally, there should be proper implementation of law that will cater for the prevention of the cases and effect of youth restiveness. Lectures, workshops and seminars should be organized for the youths to educate, enlighten and expose them they will not be used by miscreant for selfish interest.

The educated citizens should through interaction and socialization help to enlighten and influence the ideas of the uneducated ones in the society, rather than it being the other way round. Corruption in Nigeria should be curbed so that misappropriate and embezzlement of funds can be stopped. The government agencies such as the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC), responsible for ensuring the prevention of misappropriation and embezzlement of funds in Nigeria should be properly equipped to encourage them in

performing their task effectively. Monies meant for development will then be used appropriately. Such actions will encourage stability in the country.

Government should work earnestly towards curbing poverty by directing their attention to adopting functional alleviation programmes that will help the masses to have good standard of living. The use of rewards and punishments by parents, academic and vocational institutions, government, private and nongovernment organizations can serve as checks to the attitudes and behaviour of youths.

Government should endeavour that the composition of political parties and the processes involved in elections do not involve the use of hoodlums and thugs as youths are usually found within this group. Those seen as hoodlums and thugs should be rehabilitated. Any violence from such groups, her members should follow the due process of the law. There should be well established rehabilitation centres in the country to help redirect the youths and make them understand the standards expected of them as citizens.

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