

YOUTH RESTIVENESS AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: A STUDY OF THE 4TH REPUBLIC

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ABSTRACT

This study examined youth restiveness and socio-economic development in Nigeria, referencing the 4th republic. Youth restiveness is a social problem that has grave consequences on the overall national development in Nigeria. This problem has been the preoccupation of several political and academic discourses in the last few years and calls for proactive approach to overcome it. Nigeria is currently experiencing unprecedented challenges that are adversely affecting national development. One of these challenges to national development is high rate of insecurity of lives and properties occasioned by youth restiveness. Indeed, the social phenomenon of youth restiveness in the country has been at the front-burner of political and academic discussions since the dawn of the new millennium. Youth restiveness is caused by high rate of unemployment, poverty, exclusion of the youth from mainstream political participation, corruption in governance, inequitable distribution of goods and services, among others. The paper adopted a multi-disciplinary approach and analyzed youth restiveness and socio-economic development in Nigeria by using secondary sources of data like textbooks, journals, periodicals and the internet. Youth restiveness engenders political instability, creates general insecurity and militates against investment by local and foreign investors. The paper recommended job creation through entrepreneurship education, equity and social justices in the distribution of the gains and pains of development among others.

Keywords: Youth Restiveness, Fourth Republic, Violence, Crimes.

Introduction

Background of the study

Nigeria is currently experiencing unprecedented challenges that are adversely affecting national development. One of these challenges to national development is high rate of insecurity to lives and properties occasioned by youth restiveness. Indeed, the social phenomenon of youth restiveness in the country has been at the front-burner of political and academic discussions since the dawn of the new millennium. Nigerian youths are involved and most times are at the vanguard of violent crises that erupted in various parts of the country. Socioeconomically, politically or ethno-religiously motivated youth restiveness in Nigeria is not a recent thing. In the recent past it was the economically motivated Niger Delta militants in the south, the politically motivated Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) in the East that culminated in the nation's 30month civil war between 1967 and 1970, O'odua People's Congress (OPC) in the West, Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF) and the Matatsine violence in the north, the Youth Organization (YO in the North Central region), area boys and girls syndrome in major cities, particularly in Lagos, and so on. Today it is the Boko Haram insurgency in North Eastern States of Nigeria, the neo-Biafra movement - Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) in South East Nigeria, Niger Delta Avengers in the Niger Delta region of Southern Nigeria, Fulani

Herdsmen crisis in the Middle Belt region, and cultism in Lagos, Ogun, Calabar and Edo, just to mention a few.

Many lives and properties of immense and unquantifiable value have been lost as a result of youth restiveness. This social problem has reached a crisis stage and no meaningful development can occur in the midst of these crises. Development is about people and no society can be said to be developed or developing when the greater majority of its citizenry are restive or where the human security (an index of total national security) of its people have been threatened by violently armed agitators. The situation is worsened considering the fact that the youth constitute over 60% of the entire population. Social critics and political analysts are of the view that Nigeria is tilting toward a failed state as a result of its inability to successfully manage Social upheavals.

To that extent, therefore, this study examined the phenomenon, youth restiveness with a view to ascertaining its meaning while simultaneously deciphering the meanings of the two terms that constitute the concept of youth and restiveness. Also, the study discussed the causes and consequences of youth restiveness on the national security, economy, and social framework of Nigeria as well as making a number of recommendations on how youth restiveness can be tackled in the nation.

In modern times, the inability of youth to exercise self-control to issues that has led to conflict and protest has been narrowed down to scarcity and unequal distribution of natural resources, non-recognition, marginalizing their society, having feelings of discontentment, non-favourable government laws, lack of quality education and high rate of employment. Nsidibe, et al (2017), stated that restiveness orchestrated by youth has been on the increase in almost all communities in Nigeria, most especially in recent past. Since the inception of our nascent democracy, there has been a proliferation of unraveled violence, killing of innocent people and most recently the insurgence in North East, militancy in the Niger Delta and marauding attack by Fulani's herdsmen across the country. There is usually a state of anarchy, destruction of lives and properties when youths are not satisfied. At this stage, the actions of the youths are regarded as criminal in nature because their expressions are usually violent and disrupt law and order as well as various activities in the societies. In most cases, it takes the use of force such as involving the police to keep the violence of the youths in check.

The youths sometimes protect their societies through the use of youth restiveness. At times, competing management style is adopted by the youth to achieve their objectives, it involves being very assertive and uncooperative. They want to satisfy their interest as well as those of their

societies and are willing to do so at the other party's expense, be it the government. It is a phenomenon which in practice has led to a near breakdown of law and order, low productivity due to disruption of production activities, increasing crime rate, intra-ethnic hostilities, and harassment of prospective developers and other criminal tendencies.

Methods

This study adopted secondary source of data collection. This was used due to its convenience for this study. Information was sourced from the internet and journals.

The Fourth Republic

The period between 1999 and now is classified as the Fourth Republic. From October 1, 1960 to January 15, 1966 when Nigeria recorded the first military coup d'etat is regarded as the First Republic. October 1, 1979 to December 31, 1983 is the Second Republic while the elongated transition period of 1990 to June 23, 1993 when the June 12 presidential election was annulled, is regarded as the aborted Third Republic while, 1999 till date is fourth republic.

Concept of Youth Restiveness

According to Elegbeleye (2005) restiveness can be defined as a sustained protest embarked upon to enforce desired outcome from a constituted authority by an organized body of youth. It is marked by violence and disruption of lawful activities anywhere it occurs.

In the view of Igbo and Ikpa (2013), “youth restiveness involved the combination of actions, conducts and behavior, which constitutes unwholesome, socially unacceptable behavior exhibited by youths in the society.”

For Epelle in Uriah et al, (2014), though looking more at the activities of aggrieved largely dissatisfied youths especially in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria than on the actual meaning of youth restiveness, saw the social phenomenon as referring “to the plethora of activities expressed in the forms of hostage taking of foreign nationals, local oil workers and citizens for ransom; oil pipeline blow ups; illegal bunkering: peaceful or violent demonstration: bombing of public places, etc...” More so, according to Abdultabil Umar in Oromareghake, Arisi, and Igbo (2013), youth restiveness can be defined as:

...a symbolic parricide in which the young generation tries to humiliate and overthrow the instauration of the parents regardless of issues or consequences.

Umar maintained that in most developing countries and Africa in particular, government represent the older generation and in many cases, provides an obstacle to ambitious youths seeking advancement. This inadvertently leads to a tendency towards activism.

Youth restiveness has been a device used by youth to get what they want from the relevant authorities. In this vein, youth restiveness can be said to be a determined disposition by a group of youths to use violent force or threat of force to agitate for their needs and dissatisfactions to be met by the appropriate authorities. They see this need as sacrosanct and very important to meet, as such, they adopt every measure necessary and available to make their requests.

Causes of youth restiveness in Nigeria

A number of studies have identified the factors that are responsible for youth restiveness. For Ogbeifun (2007) youth restiveness often centers on such issues as total disconnection between people and the State in terms of poor infrastructural development, poverty, unemployment, economic banditry and sabotage on the part of the government unfaithful implementation of life affecting programs; ethnic marginalization and insensitivity to the plights of the people suffering the multiple negative effects of the destruction (and non-rehabilitation) of their environment through oil exploration, gas flaring and oil spillage which dilapidates farmlands and kill aquatic lives to the point of adversely affecting the people's source of livelihood: poor educational provisions and illiteracy; and so on. For Elegbeleye (2005), there are three major factors

resulting to youth restiveness, and these are: the peer motivated excitement of being a student; the perceived victimization arising from economic exploitation; and the jingoistic pursuit of patriotic ideas. For N. I. Ofem and A. R. Ajayi in Anasi (2010) the factors range from lack of humanitarian and social welfare, lack of good governance, corrupt practices of government officials, unemployment, lack of quality education, inadequate training programs, to inadequate recreational facilities, and so on.

In the view of Ken Saro-Wiwa in Chukwuemeka and Aghara (2010), the root causes of restiveness in the Niger Delta are inequitable distribution of revenue, uneven development among the Niger Delta region a region which is ideal supposed to be one of Nigeria's most developed areas since it is like the goose that lays the golden egg. For Saro-Wiwa, other factors include the poor economic conditions and infrastructural facilities like roads, hospitals schools, and power, the dilapidation of farmlands and contamination of rivers by the oil consortia within the Niger Delta region, the reduction of the Federal allocation, politics of neo-patrimonialism and favoritism at the center without regards for development at the periphery, and the discrimination against subordinate groups in the Niger Delta region (Chukwuemeka & Aghara, 2010).

For Nduka-Ozo and Igba (2017), the

perverted values which precipitate youth restiveness and which youths have to live with may be seen through the following: poor leadership styles, the economic problem of resource control, and poverty (the later which prompts some youths to pursue and attain wealth by all means available including perpetrating violence); and frustrating and ill conducive educational or learning facilities and processes like leaking classrooms, overcrowded hostels, and sorting (paying money to) lecturers for grades just to mention a few. In view of the foregoing, we will discuss a number of causes of youth restiveness, some of which have not been mentioned above. These causes include the following:

1. **High rate of youth unemployment and underemployment** - There is a high rate of youth unemployment in Nigeria. In 2022, the Nigeria's unemployment rate is estimated to reach 33%. The high and increasing incidence of youth unemployment within the Nigerian society could be described as one of the root causes of youth restiveness in the country.
2. **High level of poverty** - According to National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) cited in Ahiuma-Young (2016) about 112 million Nigerians (representing 67.1%) of the country's total population now

live below poverty level. Inequality is a common sight as wealth is concentrated in the hands of very few Nigerians while the majority of the people are languishing in penury. In other words there is a yawning gap between the rich and the poor in Nigeria. Anasi (2010) purports that this figure includes a vast number of youths in rural and urban areas in Nigeria who struggle to eke out a living by hawking chewing sticks, bottled water and drinks like Coke and Pepsi, handkerchiefs, sausage roll, etc. Anasi added that the sales per day and the profit margin on such goods are so small that they can hardly live above the poverty line (Anasi, 2010). Confronted with this reality and the inability to properly cater for their needs, the impoverished youths become a ready reservoir of recruits to perpetrate violence against the nation-state and it well-to-do citizenry.

3. **Corrupt and bad leadership** - Good governance is required to set a nation on course towards national socioeconomic and political growth and development. Unfortunately, the Nigerian state is encapsulated within bad governance where pervasive corruption thrives. The issue of corruption in Nigeria, according

to Duke and Agbaji (2017), is believed to be systemic, endemic, pervasive and a significant contributor to increased inequality, sluggish economic growth, and upsurging wave of youth restiveness in the nation, has attracted national, regional, and international concerns. Corruption, as Duke and Agbaji (2018) wrote, involved the manipulation and politicization of the nation's domestic institutions, resources and primordial features such as ethnicity and religion by political actors and elite usually for her selfish private gains, increases the spate of youth restiveness

4. **Lopsided distribution of resources** - The mono-cultural, extractive structure and renter nature of the Nigerian economy has been a bane in the peace of the nation. In that, the fragility that this comes with precipitates the occurrence of violent conflicts in Nigeria. For instance, in Nigeria, resource control has been an unending issue in the polity. Different quarters fight for the ability to control the resources derived from their geographical locations since the center has been less considerate to favor them in the revenue sharing formula owing to the plights of the people and the destruction of their sources of livelihood

(farmlands and rivers) because of resource exploration and extraction. Individuals and communities are satisfied when they are treated equally as their contemporaries. The main role of government is to ensure that the resources of a country are equitably distributed among the various elements that make up the country. This is hardly the case as injustice, discrimination, prejudice, nepotism, ethnicity and favoritism hold sway. The youths are always conscious of social injustice and tend to agitate against perceived injustice with their youthful energy and drive. The tensions that this creates tend to throw the polity into a state of comatose or disarray, as Duke and Agbaji (2018) noted among the Niger Delta youths.

5. **Lack of youth participation in Nigerian politics** - It is obvious that most appointive and elective positions within the Nigeria society are not occupied by youths. Adequate attention has not been given to the youths by the successive political leadership with respect to this key factor of political participation by the youth. The youths are mainly used as pawns and thugs by the politicians and their godfathers.
6. **Poor attitudinal disposition of wrong mind-set in youths** - Most Nigerian youths are

characterized by the mentality of total dependence on the government. Hence they are upset and tend to resort to restiveness when government aid is delayed or not forthcoming. This dependency syndrome still governs the psyche of many youths.

7. **Peer pressure** - Some youths are negatively influenced by their friends into the notion that restiveness is the answer to myriads of problems facing Nigerian youths. This trend is common among cultists, school drop-outs and those from poor family backgrounds

Consequences of youth restiveness

There are grave consequences of youth restiveness to economic and social development in Nigeria. Following Nlerum's (2012) submission, consequences of youth restiveness can be broadly categorized under security, social and economic consequences.

1. **Security consequences** - Restiveness disconnects the youth from their expected role as leaders of tomorrow; innocent lives are lost and citizens are displaced from their homes, and the restiveness may degenerate to a full blown war that may engender the disintegration of the country. A quintessence is the Nigerian civil war between 1967 and 1970 where over 1 million Nigerians lost their lives.

The figures of amount of person that have lost their lives and are displaced, and the amount of property lost as a consequence of youth restiveness in Nigeria is frightening.

2. **Economic consequences** - Youth restiveness affects the development of the country negatively as demonstrated in low industrial productivity and low human capital development. The amount of infrastructure and materializes in the dwindling of our economy. Youth restiveness exacerbated poverty in Nigeria. To borrow from Duke and Agbaji (2018), youth restiveness ravages the requisite human capital for producing the nation's economic fortunes and leads to the disruption of the economic activities of production, distribution consumption which are sine-qua-non for generating wealth for the state. For instance, it can be argued that restiveness in the Niger Delta region and the Fulani Herdsmen crisis in the Middle Belt region are factors, which facilitated slip of the Nigerian economy into recession since the nation experienced a sharp drop in oil production and sale, and the production and sale of food stuff respectively.

Social consequences

Youth restiveness disrupts social order

and breeds normlessness. With youth restiveness there is increase in social vices and crimes like cultism, gangsterism and hooliganism, rape, kidnapping, armed robbery, delinquency, and so on. In the light of this, it can be seen as Chukwuemeka and Aghara (2010) stated that the invasion of the multinational oil consortia by restive youths of the Niger Delta region and the concomitant backwashes of the invasion like the abduction and kidnapping of foreign nationals working in the oil companies, the gruesome killings in the Northeast by Boko Haram and the North central by the Fulani Herdsmen, and the armed robbery and cultist clashes in cities like Lagos and Calabar, are quintessential social consequences of youth restiveness in Nigeria.

In a nutshell, the following are the potential and actual consequences of youth restiveness in Nigeria:

1. Destruction of lives and properties.
2. It creates a fertile ground for the human right abuses to thrive.
3. Deepening tribal or ethnic and cultural differences.
4. Restiveness may degenerate to a full blown war that may engender the disintegration of the country
5. Youth restiveness negatively affects the development of the country as demonstrated in low industrial productivity and low human capital development.

6. It also increases the rate of poverty and unemployment owing to the fact that business facilities and business activities would be disrupted.
7. It discourages local and foreign investors.
8. Also youth restiveness leads to cases of kidnapping, restriction of movement and proliferation of arms and explosives.

Conclusion

The greatest resource any society can boast of its human resources. Nigeria is endowed with these resources in abundance. The youths in Nigeria constitute the bulk of this human endowment and should not be taken for granted if we are to achieve sustainability and be among the league of developed nations as envisaged in the vision 20:20. Youth restiveness is cankerworm that has eaten deep into the social fabric of the Nigerian nation. The high level of insecurity to lives and property is very inimical to national development. Destruction of lives and infrastructure inhibits development as Nigerians and foreign investors are afraid to invest their resources in the country. Tackling the problem of youth restiveness is herculean task, but it is possible.

We have no other country we can call our own if we destroy Nigeria through restiveness. In fact there will be no future for us youths and the generation unborn. We have to devise home-

grown-youth-led strategies to overcome the problem of youth restiveness. The future is in our hands and posterity will not forgive in the preceding paragraphs, we have found the magic wand to curb or totally eliminate youth restiveness in Nigeria.

Recommendations

This magic wand is embedded in the following workable recommendations.

1. The youths should resort to dialogue rather than reckless destruction of lives and property whenever they are aggrieved or have issues with the government. This is because the cost of violent conflicts youth restiveness when juxtaposed with merits of peaceful dialogue/negotiations can hardly be over-emphasized.
2. We strongly suggest the involvement of the youths in key decisions and enactment of policies that affect their well-being.
3. Let there be an urgent convention of a national conference of the youth-forum to deliberate on the state of the nation from the youth's perspective.
4. Effective and meaningful empowerment programmes should be introduced to favour the youths so that those that could not be employed by government, private and non-governmental organizations can be self-employed.
5. The government should

introduce compulsory free qualitative education for all Nigerians without boundary from primary to secondary schools.

6. There should be a policy in the

distribution of national resources to ensure fairness, equity and justice in the exercise.

7. Government should create job opportunities for the citizens without ethnic consideration.

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