

## CURBING YOUTH RESTIVENESS FOR SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: COUNSELING IMPLICATIONS

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### **ABSTRACT**

Youth restiveness is a worrisome issue in most countries of the world, Nigeria inclusive. The paper defines youth as people within the age bracket of 18-35 years, who are yet to be considered as adults in the society. The paper highlights the causes of youth restiveness which include unemployment, bad governance, poverty, inadequate communication and information flow. The paper considers the effects of youth restiveness as being multi-dimensional, which include destruction of life and infrastructure, and ravaging the requisite human capital for producing the nation's economic fortunes. The paper suggests ways of curbing youth restiveness and maintains that counseling is a service that could be applied by the counselor to modify behaviour in youth, which is detrimental to the society. The paper recommends ways of curbing restiveness in youths such as government and family providing security and good care for the youth, and engaging them in governance at all levels of government.

**Keywords:** Youth restiveness, curbing, sustainable development.

### **Introduction**

Youths are significant members of the society, whose contributions help to effect rapid development. A law-abiding youth is regarded as a potential future leader of the society, who will bring development to the society. No society progresses with a restive youth who are prone to violence, unrest, wanton destruction, and involvement in social vices. Youth restiveness has become a popular issue in Nigeria in recent times. Since the inception of the current democratic dispensation, the country has witnessed series of violence and violation of human rights perpetrated by restive youths in different parts of the country. In most cases, such acts have led to loss of lives and property. The degree to which youth restiveness constitutes a threat to economic development in Nigeria has become a worrisome phenomenon that attracts the attention of the international community. This calls for ways of curbing youth restiveness to make for sustainable development.

### **Definition of Terms**

**Youth:** The national youth policy (2001), defines youths as a people aged 18-35 years, while Adewuyi (2008) defines youth as a people between ages 18-24 years. It could be observed from the above definitions that, any person from the age of 18 years is considered as a youth, only the span in age differs between 24-35 years. However, youth could be considered as a stage in the life of a person when the society in which he or she lives ceases to regard the person as a child, but he/she is not considered as an adult.

**Restiveness:** Restiveness is a state of being when one is unable to be still or quiet, difficult to control, especially when not satisfied with something. Anasi, (2010) viewed restiveness as a combination of action, conduct, and behaviour which constitute unwholesome and socially unacceptable response to situations by youths in the society, such as riot, thuggery, robbery, rape, violence in school, drug abuse, child trafficking among others.

**Protests:** According to Adegoke (2012), youth restiveness is a sustained protest embarked upon to enforce a desired outcome, from a constituted authority by an organized body of youth. Elegbeye (2005) on the other hand, considers youth restiveness as a combination of any action or conduct that constitutes unwholesome socially unacceptable activities engaged in by the youth in any community.

Youth restiveness therefore could be considered as a phenomenon which could lead to a breakdown of law and order, low productivity as a result of disruption of productive activities, increasing crime rate, intra-ethnic hostilities and harassment of prospective developers and other criminal tendencies of youths.

### **Sustainable Development**

Sustainable development according to Agbaji, D.D., Akhabue, G.A. and Duruaku, D.E. (2018) means attaining a balance between environmental protection and human economic development and between the present and future needs. It requires an integration of economic, social and environmental approaches towards development. The overall goal of sustainable development is the long-term stability of the economy and environment which is only achievable through the integration and acknowledgment of the economic environment and social concerns throughout the decision-making process (Emas 2015).

### **Youth Restiveness in Nigeria**

Youth restiveness is not a new phenomenon in Nigeria, and it cuts across different parts of the country, in varying dimensions. According to Elegbeye (2005), youth restiveness in Nigeria is linked to conditions, issues and unwholesome leadership regimes and dates back to 1934, when Herbert Macaulay flaunted a political party to kick against dependency with fellow elite youths that had contact with the West. In the same vein, between 1950 and early mid 1960s political parties like the National Council for Nigerian Citizens (NCNC), The Northern Peoples' Congress (NPC), and the Action Group (AG) involved the youth in perpetrating coordinated political process and unrest.

The Niger Delta region which is the bedrock of oil industry in Nigeria has witnessed a lengthy period of youth restiveness. The youth of the Niger Delta region tried various means of getting government and oil companies to pay attention to their poor conditions of living and alleviate their suffering, as they considered that the resources which were used in building the nation were flowing from their land, so by virtue of that they should also be partakers of the same resources. This strife led to a rising wave in kidnapping and vandalization of oil pipelines and other vices that were perpetrated in the Niger Delta region. In Eastern Nigeria, increase in the rate of armed robbery attacks and kidnapping carried out by youths became the order of the day. In Northern Nigeria, unrivalled violence has erupted. The renowned insurgent group Boko Haram in the North Eastern part of Nigeria has vast numbers, majority of who are youths. Bomb blasts, kidnaps and killings of Nigerians and other nationals have become the prevailing trend in the country; despite the security provided in these areas the problems still loom.

Youth restiveness is also visible in student unions and other legal groups and illegal associations like cults. Such groups have turned learning institutions into theatres of violence, thus violating human rights through youth restiveness.

## **Causes of Youth Restiveness**

Youth restiveness may be caused by a number of factors identified by studies. According to Maciver & Igbojinwaekwu (2019), structural unemployment results in talents not being used where they are available making such idle minds the devil's workshop. Igbo, H. I., Ikpa, I. and Road, G. (2013) observed that psychological variables and deprivation are the basic product of conflict and restiveness of any kind. Anasi, (2010) posited that youth restiveness may occur as a reprisal attack. Ofem and Ajayi (2008), Anasi, (2010) further identified the following factors as being responsible for youth restiveness in Nigeria:

### **Unemployment**

Anasi, (2010) attested that unemployment is an issue that exists among the youth in most developing countries. Experts believe the number of jobless youths is twice as high as official estimates. Ozohu-Suleiman (2006) observed that Nigerian youths are trapped by unemployment, that the rising tide of unemployment and the fear of a bleak future among the youth in Nigeria has made them vulnerable to the manipulations of agents of provocation. Youths who are not employed engage in vices that are detrimental to themselves and the society.

### **Poverty**

Poverty connotes inequality and social injustice and this traumatizes the poor. Amorawo (2000) and Zakaria (2006) agreed that there is a link between poverty, loss of livelihood, inequality and youth restiveness, as evidenced by the numerous violent protests against the wielders of power.

### **Bad Governance**

When one talks of good governance, one is referring to the government that takes care of her citizens' welfare and provides good services to the people. Bad governance is the opposite of good governance, and it is bad governance that breeds youth restiveness that slows economic development. Onyekpe (2007) observed that, good governance is required for the growth and development of any nation. In Nigeria, bad governance is more common than good governance, resulting in disjointed development. Onyekpe (2007) contended that successive administrations have not allocated much to the needs of the youth, and when the meager allocation is given, it is not judiciously used on the needs of the youths. Thus, youths are restive and agitated, when they perceive that resources meant for them are wasted by those in authority and there is no platform for them to participate in governance or dialogue with the high authorities.

### **Inadequate Communication and Information Flow**

Ifidon and Ahiauzu (2005) showed in their study of the Niger Delta that, communication and information flow is a critical resource for individual and collective emancipation and advancement. Economic development cannot be achieved without accurate relevant information. It is the responsibility of leaders that youths have access to information that will guide their actions. Thus, most Nigerian youths who participate in violence across the country are unformed. Information therefore plays a vital role in wealth generation; it is a critical resource in today's world. Youths therefore must be economically empowered through access to business and economic information. Access to entrepreneurial information would make youth inaccessible to those who want to recruit them for anti-social actions.

### **Effects of Youth Restiveness on Nigerian's Economic Development**

According to Elegbeleye (2005), a lawless, indulgent and violent youth is a threat to the nation's economic development. Onyekpe (2000) opined that youths outnumber the middle-aged and the aged people in the society. Besides their numerical superiority, youths have energy and ideas that are society's great potentials. The National Youth Development

Policy (2001) asserts that, youths are the foundation of the society. Their energies, inventiveness, character and orientation define the pace of development of a nation. Through their labour power, a nation makes giant strides in economic development and socio-political attainments. However, most Nigerian youths have suspended the quest for the economic development of their country and have taken to restiveness. Igbo (2013) stated that, the obvious effect of youth restiveness on the Nigerian society is the loss of lives that would have triggered productivity. This constitutes a major threat to the society or the state as well as its corporate existence. According to Elegbeleye (2005) youth restiveness manifests violent demonstrations and tribal conflicts, which slow economic development as the youths are more inclined to barbaric behaviour than thinking of what benefits the country would derive from them.

Socially, youth restiveness leads to a breakdown and collapse of the society. The economic implication is detrimental to the economy of the state because the youths do not develop positive thinking, neither do they have the desire to acquire and use assertive skills for sustainable economic development. Hence the youth allow peer group influence of restiveness to take over them. Anasi, (2010) contended that youth restiveness had negative multi-dimensional effects on the development of the country, as demonstrated in low industrial productivity and low human capital development. The amount of infrastructure and other resources destroyed as well as oil pipelines vandalized can hardly be quantified, this translates to a dwindling of the economy. Youth restiveness exacerbates poverty in Nigeria since it ravages the requisite human capital for producing the nation's economic fortunes, and leads to the destruction of economic activities of production, distribution and consumption, which are a sine-qua-non for generating wealth for the state. According to Chukwuemeka & Aghara, (2010), youth restiveness disrupts social order, breeds normlessness. With youth restiveness, there is increase in social vices like cultism, gangsterism and hooliganism, rape, kidnapping, armed robbery and delinquency, among others. In the light of this, it can be seen that, the invasion of the multi-national oil consortia by restive youths of the Niger Delta region and the concomitant back wash like the abduction and kidnapping of foreign nationals working in the oil companies, the gruesome killing in the North East by Boko Haram, and in the North Central by Fulani herdsmen, and the armed robbery and cult clashes in cities like Lagos and Calabar, are social consequences of youth restiveness in Nigeria.

### **Curbing Youth Restiveness in Nigeria**

Youth restiveness has posed serious threats to human development across different parts of the country, with significant effects on life, property and corporate existence of the country. Based on the consequences of this menace, Idowu (2004), opined that counseling is the best bet for addressing problems confronting the youths before they escalate to unrest. This is because counseling can bridge the gap of communication between the youth and relevant authorities. Adegoke (2012), on the other hand recommended some solutions that can be applied to address youth restiveness and they include:

- Families taking time to engage the youth within the home. This will keep them busy and prevent them from engaging in any form of exuberance with their peers.
- Educational institutions should make the school a place of trusted relationship where youths will learn to relate cordially with their mates and acquire assertive skills that will make them to be helpful to the society.
- Government should provide care and protection for all the young people at all levels. This will hinder them from joining restive groups for protection. Most importantly, government should provide job opportunities for the youth and also a platform for dialoguing with youths to avoid a communication break down and loss of information, which lead to youth restiveness.

Communication would create room for sharing information and help youths to share their thoughts and feelings, clarify problems and consider alternative ways of coping or adapting to their situations.

### **Counseling Implications**

Counseling is a helping relationship that assists individuals to understand themselves better, manage their life activities, develop their own points of view and make their own rational decisions. Most often, youth restiveness manifests as a lifestyle which must be changed, if the victims are reoriented positively. According to Agi, (2017), one of the tools that might make positive input is information service in counseling. Through this service, the guidance counselor may help the youths to acquire knowledge which they are ignorant of. Such information could liberate them from falsehood and misconceptions being provided by peers and adults, who utilize them to fulfill personal wishes and later dump them to their fate. Youths also need information that will get them economically empowered, hence the counselor should give them entrepreneurial information that will help them develop skills that can sustain them economically. Group counseling of youths, in school and non-school settings, could also be helpful. The counselor could organize workshops, talk shows and seminars where cognitive restructuring skills could also be used to curb youth restiveness in counseling sessions. As professionals, counselors should work towards restructuring negative views held by youths. The insinuation that restiveness is the only way of expressing their views and demands could be modified, to more rational ways, if appropriate information is given to them.

### **Conclusion**

The greatest resource any society can boast of is its human resources. Nigeria is endowed with this resource in abundance. The youth 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 vision 20-20. Youth restiveness is a social vice that is giving the entire nation sleepless nights. The causes of youth restiveness are multifaceted and hence curbing it demands a multidimensional approach. The high level of insecurity to life and property is inimical to sustainable development. This paper believes that effective counseling to youths could go a long way in curbing youth restiveness in Nigeria.

### **Suggestions**

The following suggestions, if implemented, could help reduce youth restiveness in Nigeria to the barest minimum:

- Government should give substantial allocation to the needs of youth, and ensure that the resources meant for the youth are not diverted into the pockets of those in authority, to avert youth restiveness.
- Entrepreneurial skills should be taught to the youths in school or other study centers by individuals or organizations. This will reduce the number of unemployed and jobless youths who are vulnerable to restive situations.
- Youths should be involved in key decisions that affect their well-being so that they will express their thoughts and feelings.
- Government should make guidance and counseling a must in school and non-school setting in Nigeria. Counselors should use guidance services required to help the youths to acquire knowledge, which they are ignorant of. As professionals, counselors should restructure negative views held by youths, as this will help in curtailing restiveness in Nigeria for sustainable development using the Rational Emotive Theory.

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