

YOUTHS, PEACE AND SECURITY IN NIGERIA: ‘WHAT WE NT WRONG’

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Abstract

Peace and security in Nigeria have remained ‘scare treasure’ due to activities of the youths. There has been siege of insecurity making the country unattractive to investors. The study investigated reasons for restiveness; why it has persisted; youths’ awareness of its implication on themselves and the nation. A cross sectional survey of youths (students and non- students) in six higher institutions was done; two from Imo, Abia, Rivers; with only an institution sampled in Bayelsa. The choices of the institutions were judgementally decided. Questionnaire was used to elicit information from 200 youths randomly sampled. Analyses was done using simple percentages. Findings revealed that: there is gap in educational channel for inculcating values and impacting knowledge to the young; poorly moulded youths; disappointed and aggrieved youths due to failed leaders and nation. The study recommends pro-active re-orientation of the youth’s mind-sets through counselling; public enlightenment, teaching on cultural, social, and moral values; subsidised and compulsory education at all level; employment of the youths, with at least 20% in civil service jobs yearly and policy against the use of youths as tugs.

Key words: Youths, Youth Empowerment, Youth Restiveness, Peace, Security

History, tradition and culture seem to have a convergence on the place of the youths in leadership, peace, security and development in pre-colonial and present Nigeria. Their importance in the society is traditionally and customarily recognised because of the vital role they play both at the family and society at large. Consequently, every society considers necessary the proper upbringing of the young socially, politically economically morally and otherwise, for future of the nation. It becomes a duty therefore, to inculcate in a child the proper traditions; culture, norm, and values of his people; that of the larger society to avoid deviant behaviour and to ensure his usefulness to the growth and development of the nation.

In post “colonisation ethnic groups and community (sic) in Africa were held cohesively by rules and regulations, values and social sanctions, approvals, rewards and punishments into which the child was inducted” (Agbmabiese (nd)). These guiding values helped to shape a child into a well formed youth disciplined enough for positive contribution to societal development.

Today, the case seems totally different. The wrong values seem to be inculcated in the youths; through wrong communication channels, poor education, wrong sources (persons, environment) and peer group influence. This deviation from the norm, politicians, educators and other observers according to Boateng (1983) attribute it to the increasing deterioration of intergenerational communication, attitudinal change in Africa and other parts of the world to the systems of education introduced by the western colonial powers.

The African cultural education bridges the gap between adult generation and youth. This educational system is fast giving way to creative individuals completely removed from their traditional norms and values. Perry’s dictum, according to Boateng(1983) cautions that- “the past as embodied in contemporary adult is both the bed of reactionaries and spring board of innovation. Impliedly the good values of hard work, discipline, honesty and peaceful co-existence instilled in children and internalised, become a bed of reactionaries and springboard guiding what they will inject into the society in future. Like the computer language will say, ‘cabbage-in-cabbage-out’.

Along this thinking, the African system and Nigerian tradition recognise the family as the first level of contact in the upbringing of the young. The socialization process which starts from the family continues within the influences of community, schools, churches, politics, economic and other societal structural outfits necessary for moulding the young.

In spite of all these, there are acknowledged incidences of increasing rate of youths' deviant behaviours (robbery, kidnapping, Boko Haram insurgency) resulting to absence of peace and insecurity in Nigeria. The probing question is, can restiveness among youths, insecurity and absence of peace in Nigeria be linked to the galvanization processes of empowering the youths towards being resourceful in the society. The study therefore examined family and government responsibilities in socialisation, government policy decisions and the implementation processes of these decisions; and other societal contributions to the escalating grievances and insecurity in Nigeria.

Statement of Problem

In recent times, Nigeria has been witnessing persistently, increasing rate of violent display by youths to such a magnitude that the environment has been so un-peaceful with the threat of insecurity every second. This situation has persisted in spite of the entrenched family cultural values in child upbringing and the recently intensified governments' policies on youth's empowerment programs. It is in view of this that the study investigated processes surrounding the moulding of the youth, to know if moulding process have been sufficiently and empirically studied.

Objective of Study

The Objective of the Study was to

- (1) examine the causes of youth restiveness in Nigeria
- (2) investigate the extent to which youths are aware of the implications of their restive activities to the society at large
- (3) find out the expectations of the youths for lasting peace and security in the country.

Research Questions

- (1) What are the possible causes of youth restiveness in Nigeria?
- (2) To what extent are Nigerian youths aware of the impact of their deviant behaviour to the society?
- (3) How can youth restiveness be curbed?

Statement of Hypothesis

- (1) Ho; Nigerian youths are not significantly aware of the impact of youth restiveness on society.
- (2) Ho; Youth restiveness has no significant impact on the society

Clarification of Concepts

Youths:

The United Nations says, youths are those within the ages of 15-24 years; while the national youth service corps puts it at 18-20 years. The youth policy says they are all young persons of the ages 18-35 years (Igbuzor 2013). The national youth policy according to (SARPN 2008) defines youth as persons between the ages of 14-35 years.

Security

This is defined as safety from attack harm or damage;... a situation in which you can feel confident and safe.(Security 2009). It is the protection of person, building, organization, or country against threats such as crime or attacks by foreign countries. It has to do with having confidence in one's family and relation (Cambridge dictionary online 2015). It is a state of being free from danger or injury,

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freedom from anxiety or fear (word web n.d). Today's Nigerian environment has been made so non peaceful and insecure by the restive displays of the youths.

Peace

This is a process of stopping violence, saving lives, healing shattered communities (PEACE DIRECT 2015) it is seen as concord or harmony and tranquillity; a state of law or civil government,...justice or goodness, a balance or equilibrium power. Peace may be opposed to war or opposite of antagonistic conflict, violence or war [Rumnel (nd)].

Youths and the Society

The age differences notwithstanding, Igbuzor (2013) says that youths constitute the backbone of and the future of any nation. The progress and future development of the nation depends to a large extent on youths. Their importance is as contained in Nigerian youth policy as nation's asset, future leaders, greatest investment and a good measure of the extent to which a country can reproduce and sustain itself. Characteristically, there is a link between the present and the future generation which agrees with Perry's dictum (Bloateng 1983). The youths constitute the highest population mostly in developing countries. Though they are to a large extent inexperienced, and impatient, their spontaneous nature, adventurism, bravery and dynamism can advance a nation positively in all facets of societal needs if properly galvanized (Igbuzor (2013)).

Though there is controversial angle to the concept. "Youth" according to SARPN (2008), connotes violent, undisciplined criminal elements in the society; to others it signifies marginalized segment of the society. Consequently, there is need to properly galvanise them into being useful to society. Moulding or galvanizing means to, strengthen, reinforce, put into proper form and shape, stimulate to action... bring to the state of being awake (word web dictionary); keep from rusting and corroding (word web dictionary). Having gone through...processes of coating (moulding)...it gives durability to steel and makes it hard to scratch, have a well finished outlook that makes it attractive to many [What (nd)]. This is applicable to a well galvanised child. Proper moulding makes the youth useful and attractive to the society.

Youth and Restiveness in Nigeria

According to Osalor(2012) youths and restiveness have as much been used together that it seems to have taken on a life of its own. Its presence in Nigeria has left high record of proliferation all over the country and even Africa. Many agitations from the youths have left tons of people dead, infrastructures, personal properties lost and wasted.

In Nigeria, restiveness among youths has been reoccurring in different shapes and forms. It has persistently been building up across the different zones and seems to have defiled all strategies and approaches to solutions. The consciousness of restiveness among youths was raised in Nigerian security alert by the Niger-Delta Youth Restive activities and the associated pipeline vandalization, increased rate of kidnapping, ritual killings, political, assassinations and other killings. The act constitutes danger to Nigerian political, socio-economic stability and promotes generalized breakdown of law and order. The drum of insecurity was drummed loud and clear following notorious pockets of anti-social behaviors that proceeded Niger-delta activities. There had been earlier cases of deviant activities- Aba Bakasi boys (with security connotation), MASSOB (movement for the actualization of the sovereign state of Biafra with political connotations), Movements of Ogoni People (MOSOP) and its youth forum, National Youth Council of Ogboni People, Egbesu Boys, Ijaw Youth, Bayelsa Youth Federation, Federated Ijaw Communities and Niger Delta Volunteers Force all in Niger Delta Area (Tenuche 2009). The height of

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the restive and social display is the Boko Haram insurgency, a security challenge that has thrown the country into pandemonium.

Youth Empowerment

This is an outcome of a process through which youths as change agents gain skills that enable them to impact on their lives, those of other individuals and communities. An empowered youth has skill, critically aware and actively involved in increasing community change. Empowerment at organizational level involves implementation of culture, vision and system that support youth empowerments at individual level (YES 2011).

According to the YES model, youths can be empowered using three pronged approach that engages the young ones to effectively develop skills, gain awareness, be creative and contribute to change processes that will lead to community development (YES 2011). Youth empowerments according to Uzochukwu (2015) can be done in these five ways- financial, academic, skills acquisition (entrepreneurship skill), moral and agricultural among other means. A well empowered youth therefore is properly strengthened into being useful, attractive to society and not restive.

Youth Empowerment Schemes in Nigeria

Below are some youth's empowerment schemes in Nigeria.

1. Integrated youth empowerment program (niyi 2013)
2. Youth Enterprise with innovation in Nigeria (YOUWIN)
3. Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programs (SURE-P)
- 4 Youth Initiative for Sustainable Agriculture in Nigeria. Niger Delta Youth Empowerment Program (UNDP nd)
5. Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS) (Uzochukwu 2015)

Youth Grievances in Nigeria: Posited Claims and Assumption

The Niger Delta youths argued that being the bed rock of oil industry in Nigeria and considering the damages done to their farm lands, rivers and environment, they cannot remain alienated from the resources in their land (Tenuche 2009). In addition to these assumptions and claims, Dunne (2014) observed that, the younger people are disillusioned with respect to voting in elections. They are convinced that their votes do not make any difference. There is no policy change or plans for (prosperous future of) the youths. Harmer (2014) shares similar opinion on youth's disillusionment in politic; meaning that this disposition of the youths is applicable even outside Nigeria. He observes that youths are the engine house of the next wave, their disillusion of their country possesses challenges that must be addressed urgently.

Theoretical Assumptions and Factors Responsible For Anti-Social Behaviors

The elite's manipulation and mobilization thesis postulates that, the elite find frustrated youths as willing instrument for perpetuating violence while pursuing their interest as individuals or groups. This is common during political party elections. The competitors for power and privileges use sub-ethnic sentiments to woo the youths remotely to actualize their masked vested class interest (Tenuche (2009).

Sociologically every behavior has reason (s). Factors responsible for restiveness ranges from individuals, group failures to societal factors; and continues to widen everyday as the sophistication of the means through which the perpetuations of this condemnable act appear to be changing (www.Isokonorthamerica.org/sogbapaper.htm); Oboada, Ololube, and Egbezor (2015).

The anger expressed by the youths from different zones is consequent to feeling of relative deprivation, rising expectations and frustration aggression hypotheses (Anifowse 1982 in Tenuche 2009). The gap in youths' felt needs that were not filled overtime and the manipulations of youths by the elite class are also factors in deviant display by these youths (Tenuche, 2009). These felt needs are probably among others, neglect by both government and parents; lack of parental bounding, poor to non-

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counselling, youths dropout of schools and graduate chronic unemployment. This is in line with the views of Oboada, et al (2015) that the inability to meet the youths needs through institutional provisions or arrangements results in youth restiveness. Consequently, they opt to take laws into their own hands. Insincerity on the part of government to development plans that can create full employment, available social service, equitable distribution of income and basic political freedom are also issues. Again, is the issue of massive corruption within the system, mostly among state officials (Egwu 2001 in Tenuche 2009).

Other challenges to youth restiveness according to Igbuzor (2013) are moral decadence in the society and lack of appropriate moral role models. The leaders are not leading by example. There are-

- Lack of suitable recreational facilities to keep the youth occupied; Religions fanaticizing, cult activities. Unemployment and underdevelopment, poor education; breaking of family values and indiscipline in the society.
- Expression of youthful exuberance- youths have a lot of energy to expend. Often the energy is misdirected into wholesome social unacceptable activities that threaten the nation's existence. The problem is that once the youths get mobilized in these nefarious activities, they become uncontrollable thereby putting the society to danger. Consequently, they are considered as misfits and unfit for leadership roles.
- Undue exposure to politics - an instance is the involvement of youths of the Niger Delta in 'the Million Man March of 1998' that tried to woo Sani Abacha into transforming himself into a civilian president. That exposure partly sparked the flame of youth restiveness in Niger Delta. This agrees with Tim Stanley in Fisher (2014) on early exposure of youths to politics
- The unpatriotic attitude of Nigeria leaders without fear of contradiction appears not to have interest of the youths (masses) at heart.

This is why the Boko Haram massacre was allowed to linger without reassuring solution at sight, except the verbal reassurances by President Jonathan of being on top of the situation while the citizens (masses) are held down in cold blood.

Moulding Processes

Family Roles in Moulding the Young

Parents shape their children by inculcating good moral values in them. At the family level, they are the first point in traditional and social Education. Most parents fail in this duty. They are so busy that they cannot account for the behavior of their children. Lack of parental care therefore rubs off the kids, human meekness (Becroft, A. J. and Rhonda T. 2006). Consequently, they turn deadly and destructive.

Government Role

Government makes policies and programmes that are necessary for shaping the young into being useful and gainfully occupied. The Federal Ministry of Labour and Productive; and youth development have failed to formulate and implement pro-job creation policies to sufficiently galvanize the innate talents and overwhelming energy in the youths or graduates of various universities (Onwubuiko and Okonkwo nd).

Methodology

The study employed survey design approach. Six higher institutions in the South- South and South- East including Bayelsa State were used. These are, Federal Polytechnic Nekede, Owerri, Federal University of Technology, Owerri, River State University of Science and Technology, Port-Harcourt, University of Port-Harcourt, Abia State University, Uturu, Abia State Polytechnic, Aba, and Niger Delta University, WilberForce Island. The choice of one institution in Bayelsa State (Niger Delta University, WilberForce) is because it is the major institution in that State.

Table 1. Sample

Zones	State	Institutions	Students	Non Students	Total
South-East	Imo	FPN. Owerri	15	10	25
		FUTO	15	10	25
		Sub total	30	20	50
	Aba	ABSU	15	10	25
		Abia poly	15	10	25
		Sub total	30	20	50
	Rivers	RUST	15	10	25
		UNIPORT	15	10	25
		Sub total	30	20	50
	Bayelsa	NDU,Wilber Force inland	30	20	50
		Grand Total	120	80	200

The choice of the institutions and sample of 200 youths for the study were judgementally decided and randomly selected respectively. Fifteen (15) respondents were sampled from each institution, while ten (10) non- students sampled from the environment of the schools; with the exception of Bayelsa State where 30 samples were sourced from one institution and 20 non-students from the school environment for convenience. Questionnaire was used to elicit information from these respondents. Analysis was done using simple percentages.

Analysis of Findings

All the 200 copies of the questionnaires were completed and returned for the analysis.

Table 2: Cause of insecurity as manifested in youth’s restiveness

i Family up brining	90%
ii Frustration	80%
iii Unemployment	80%
vi Attitude of the leaders	90%
v Peer group influence	60%
vi loss of hope for the future	40%

Table3: Extent of Awareness of the Implication of Youth Restiveness on the Socio –Economic Development of Nigeria

High Extent	30%
Low Extent	60%
Undecided	10%
Total	100%

Discussion of Findings

i. Causesof Restiveness

From the analysis of findings, family up bringing ranked highest 90%. Many of the respondents attributed youth’s deviant behaviour and restive attitude to poor or absence of proper home upbringing.

Many lacked the close touch/contact with their working class and busy business parents. Most children were left under the care of Nannies and relatives. The family and societal traditions, culture, norms and values were not properly inculcated. They were exposed wrongly; they therefore became receptive to influences around them and peer influence constituting 60%. Most youths at this stage engaged in unimaginable deviant behaviour. Some got into drugs early, others joined cult at primary and secondary school levels. Majority of the Youths (90%) were of the view that, unemployment pushed them to the streets in search of what else to do.

The attitude of the leaders, the policies, programs and policy implementation did not give any hope to the youths. Consequently, greater percentage of the youths became frustrated and lost hope on what the future holds for them. The youths being very energetic, jobless, frustrated, and angry looking for where to direct their stored energy readily jump at any violent situation that offers them viable opportunity of getting engaged, to expend the piled up energy and vent out their displeasure of the societal neglect on them.

(4) Extent of Awareness of the Implication of Restiveness

From the findings, 60% of the youths were totally unaware of the implication of their misbehaviours. They were unable to connect insecurity to absence of investors, a situation that deepens unemployment. This is because the government cannot employ every employable youth without private sector partnership in the exercise. The youths also do not realize the effect of drugs and other chemicals ingested to be able to act uncontrollably, on their health.

Consequences of Poorly Moulded Youths

According to Tenuche (2009) poorly groomed youths display marked deviant behaviours which manifest in restiveness, violence, insecurity, absence of peace, (social unrest, self-destruction) and war dominated society. All these are as a result of abuse of cultural heritage. It results to incessant use of narcotic by the youths to muster enough boldness to implement their nefarious activities. Other consequences are that, poorly groomed youths lead to destruction of peace and reign of insecurity among a people. They are always violent, making the society insecure and wasting the economy through incessant destruction; which results to-

- i. Social dislocation and population displacement;
- ii .Social tension and new pattern of settlements which most time is not good;
- iii. dislocation and disruption of family and communal life;
- iv. dehumanization of women, children and men especially in areas where rape, child abuse and neglect are used as instrument of war;
- v. deepening of hunger and poverty in the polity (www.journalarchieivesWebs.com/172-185). These various violent human activities destroy peace and the consequences of human destruction of peace are that –vii.Humanities suffer (Deut. 28 vs 53-57, king 2 vs 5-6) nations suffer, (Jeremiah 49, 31-32); the land suffers-Jeremiah 25 vs 37; the whole creation suffers (Rev. 63 vs 4, Gen. 65 vs 7) and the insecurity reigns.

Conclusion

The issue of peace and security in requires committed and sincere effort in tackling it. The and persistent nature of the restive activities requires reappraisal of the approaches so far employed at stemming it. There is need to look beyond the immediate which are symptoms and treat the fundamental causes.

What went wrong in the system with respect to the Nigerian culture, norms, values of honesty, discipline, communal living and hard work should be identified and remedied. Finally a new approach to

solving old problems must be devised. Greed and avarices of the statesmen who decide the faith of the youths have not really done the nation good. Patriotism sincerity to issues of nation building, peace and security are the option to building a stable and developed Nigerian state.

Recommendation

To restore peace and security in the zones, the youths demand; transparent policies and plans of actions on empowerment programmes. The issue of churning out policies programs and not following them up for effective implementation and sustenance should be addressed. There should be employment policies that will enable at least 20% of youths to be engaged every year. Wooing to action with falsehood is a legacy that should not be transferred.

Grooming process especially at family level should be intensified. Parent should play a leading role in the restoration of peace and security in Nigeria by inculcating good family values in their children. Education should be subsidised and made compulsory at all levels so that the young will be well educated and exposed to the indigenous values of the society.

These agree with the teachings of some philosophers that all countries have philosophies relevant to their existential circumstances (Ndofirepi and Ndofirepi, 2012). Nigeria should be sincere and positive with programs aimed at getting the youths usefully engaged. Idle mind is a free place for evil. Therefore, counselling and qualitative education to enable the society tap the potentials in the youths are needed. There should be image rebuilding of the leaders, in order to restore trust and erase the feeling of apathy among the youths. This will encourage them to get involved in politics and vote. In all there should be reorientation of the mind-set of the youth. Attitudinal and behavioural changes are needed for proper formation and re-directing youths on useful part to self-actualization.

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