

Causes, Effects and Ways of Curbing Youth Restiveness in Nigeria:

Implications for Counselling

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Abstract

The study was a survey designed to investigate causes, effects and ways of curbing youth restiveness in Nigeria. Three research questions were formulated. A total of 200 National Youth Service Corps members were sampled from 1200 Batch B 2012 Benue State. An instrument titled “Causes, Effects and Ways of Curbing Youth Restiveness Inventory” (CEWYI) was used to collect data. Data was analyzed using frequencies and percentages. The result revealed that youth restiveness is mostly caused by illiteracy, unequal distribution of national resources, poor child upbringing among others. The effects include upsurge of social vices and destruction of lives and properties while the result also revealed that it can be curbed through skill acquisition programmes and enlightenment against the phenomenon. The paper concluded that counselling could be an effective way of curbing youth restiveness in Nigeria.

Keywords: Youth Restiveness, Causes, Effects, Curbing, Counselling

1. Introduction

Restiveness among youths globally and those in Nigeria has become a behaviour pattern which has degenerated into a topical global issue. Youth restiveness portrays man’s negative side of social development. This negative development is rather unfortunate and has become one of the many security challenges facing man in the contemporary society. In many occasions, lives and properties worth millions of naira have been lost or vandalized and some razed down by restive youths. As observed by Chukwuemeka and Agbara (2010), human society and in fact the entire universe is simply and squarely a complex entity. In view of this, individuals and groups have their complexities, needs, aspirations, hopes, goals, opinions, views and values which could be social, economic, religious, psychological or political. Consequently, there is bound to be restiveness among different groups of people especially youths who are at their prime age.

The term youth has been variously defined. Ndu (2000) and Yusuf (2001) saw youths as neither adolescents nor children characterized by excessive energy that needs to be exerted, which if not guarded, is channeled into negative tendencies. The United Nations General Assembly and World Bank cited in Adewuyi (2008) defined the youth as people between ages 15 to 24 years. In Nigeria, the people within the age limit of 30 years are considered as youths hence they are allowed to participate in the National Youth Service Scheme (NYSC). For this paper, the NYSC definition of youth is adopted.

Youths are filled with energy and when this energy is positively channeled or guarded, they are highly productive, and hence they are likely to contribute to the overall development of the society. On the other hand, when the energy is negatively channeled, restiveness and its resultant effects are likely to be felt. Chika and Onyene (2010) observed that to be restive is to be unable to stay still, or unwilling to be controlled especially because one is bored or not satisfied with certain decisions, changed or existing laws considered to be unfavourable. Youth restiveness involves the combination of actions, conducts and behaviour which constitutes unwholesome, socially unacceptable behaviour exhibited by youths in the society.

Youth restiveness has been a device used by the youth to get what they want from the relevant authority. Chika and Onyene (2010) asserted that youth resistance to conditions, issues and unwelcomed leadership regimes dates back to 1934 when Herbert Macaulay floated a political party to kick against dependency with fellow elite youths that had contact with the West. In addition, political parties like the National Council for Nigerian Citizens (NCNC), the Northern Peoples Congress (NPC), the Action Group (AG), has their youth wings as vibrant as the other parties.

Since then, there has been proliferation of youth association like students’ unions, ethnic cliques

and cleavages as well as clannish orientation among students which appear to have legitimized restive reactions among the youths on campuses. The phenomenon of ethnic militia such as the Odua People's Congress (OPC) in the west, Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) in the East, Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF) in the North and Tiv Youth Organization (TYO) in the North Central, Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) both in the South-South. These local forces which chain relevance in crime prevention and control but whose activities are parallel with State recognition are threats to national security.

Youth restiveness may be caused by a number of factors. Chukwuemeka (2008) observed that composite unemployment in Nigeria increased from 3.8% in 2006 to 4.2% in the first half of 2011. He further stated that structural unemployment results in talents not being used where they are available, hence idle mind is definitely the devil's workshop. Similarly, Coleman (1996) observed that psychological variables and deprivation is the basic product of conflict and restiveness of any kind. He further argued that the more widespread and intense deprivation is among members of a population, the greater is the magnitude of violence in one form or the other. In the foregoing therefore, one can argue that the unequal socio-economic development of the various ethnic groups in Nigeria led to inter ethnic and intra-ethnic conflicts. For instance, Chukwuemeka, Anazodo and Nzewi (2011) found that dissatisfaction of the people of South-South especially the youths on the level of attention given to development of their region and the damages to their ecology by oil spillage are the major causes of the alarming rate of youth restiveness.

Youth restiveness may occur as reprisal attack. For instance, the Tiv youths did a reprisal attack on the Jukuns in Makurdi following the Tiv massacre in Taraba State and in Zaki-Biam by Nigerian soldiers. Chika and Onyene (2010) in their study attributed youth restiveness to adults' coercive control over their children, denial of participatory opportunities to youths, resource scarcity and financial constraints and leaders failures, peer groups, and foreign interferences. The obvious effects of youth restiveness on the Nigerian society are loss of lives and properties, which constitute a major threat to security of the state as well as its corporate existence. It also discourages genuine economic and democratic development. Strategies employed include mass agitations, protests, demonstrations, looting, vandalism, cultism, ethnic militia, political thuggery among others.

This trend of events demands for urgent and timely intervention. Therefore, counselling intervention becomes a compelling necessity for the Nigerian youths. Hence youth restiveness stems from thinking (cognition), the use of cognitive behaviour restructuring is eminent. It is against this background that the study sets to examine the causes, effects and the strategies than be used in reducing this trend.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Recent media reports and personal observations indicates cases of armed conflicts, killings, wanton destruction of lives and properties kidnappings, lootings, pipeline destructions among others in most Nigerian States. The issue of insecurity in the country is upper most concern to the Nigerian government and religious leaders. Recently, Federal and State legislators were killed in cold blood in Plateau State. Churches have been bombed in Niger, Plateau and Kogi States. For insecurity to be seen not to be religious, mosques have also suffered similar fates in Borno and Kano States. One wonders who the perpetrators of these evil acts are. Security reports show that most of those involved in these acts. The two suicide bombers that attacked the residences of Emirs in Borno and Yobe States were reported to be between 12 and 18 years respectively. The problem that is facing the nation is how youth restiveness can be curbed in Nigeria. It is against this background that this paper seeks to determine the causes, effects and ways of curbing youth restiveness in Nigeria.

1.1.1 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to examine causes, effects, and ways of curbing youth restiveness in Nigeria. Specifically the study intends to:

1. Ascertain the causes of youth restiveness in Nigeria.
2. Determine the effects of youth restiveness in Nigeria.
3. Suggest ways for curbing youth restiveness in Nigeria.

Research Questions

1. What are the causes of restiveness among Nigerian youths?
2. What effects does youth restiveness have on Nigeria?
3. What ways are appropriate for curbing youth restiveness in Nigeria?

1.1.2 Methodology

This section describes the method used in carrying out the study. Survey design was adopted for the study. This is because the study variables are not subjected to manipulation and can be generalized to larger population. The population was one thousand two hundred (1200) National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) Batch B members posted to Borno State but having their orientation at Wannune Orientation Camp in Benue State. The

choice of this population is because it is a fair representation of Nigerian youths from the thirty six States and Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. Two hundred respondents were selected from the population. Stratified sampling was used based on their geo-political zones. This was followed by random sampling to get the respondents that participated in the study.

An instrument titled “Causes, Effects and ways of Curbing Youth Restiveness Inventory (CEWYI) was used to collect data. The instrument was divided into four sections ‘A-D’. Section ‘A’ addressed the bio data of respondents, Sections ‘C-D’ contained three open ended questions asking respondents to state their opinions on causes, effects and strategies towards curbing youth restiveness in Nigeria. CEWYI was designed in this form to allow each respondent state his/her mind on these issues. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, frequencies and percentages. This was best to explain respondents’ opinions on these issues.

1.1.3 Results

The results are presented below.

Table 1: Bio-data of Study Participants

Variable	F	%	
Sex	Male	114	57.00
	Female	86	43.00
Age	20-25years	106	53.00
	26-30 years	94	47.00
Geographical Zone	South East	22	11.00
	South West	40	20.00
	South South	30	15.00
	North East	20	10.00
	North West	44	22.00
	North Central	44	22.00
Total	200	100.00	

Research Question One:

What are the causes of youth restiveness among Nigerian youths?

The data was collected by asking them to list the causes they observed and know.

Table 2: Percentage Scores of Causes of Youth Restiveness in Rank Order

S/N	ITEMS	N	F	%
1	Illiteracy	200	120	60
2	Unequal distribution of natural resources	200	108	54
3	Poor child upbringing	200	108	54
4	Poverty	200	104	52
5	Unemployment	200	100	50
6	Political instability/frustration	200	70	35
7	Corruption	200	62	31
8	Bad governance	200	58	29
9	Ethnic/tribal crisis	200	56	28
10	Drug/alcohol abuse	200	46	23
11	Religious crises	200	42	21
12	Over population	200	40	21
13	Under population	200	40	20
14	Peer group/cult influence	200	34	17
15	False teaching in churches/mosque	200	24	12
16	Insecurity	200	28	14
17	Ineffective communication from political leaders	200	26	13

Table 2 shows percentage scores of causes of youth restiveness in rank order, prominent among them are illiteracy 60% and unequal distribution of national resources 54%. The least identified is false teaching in churches/mosques 12%.

Research Question 2: What effect does youth restiveness have on Nigeria?

Table 3: Percentage Scores or Effects of Youth Restiveness in Rank Order

S/NO	ITEM	N	F	%
1	Upsurge of social vices/ crime	200	124	62
2	Destruction of lives and properties	200	118	59
3	Civic unrest	200	88	44
4	Retardation of national development	200	74	37
5	Encourages sectionalism	200	68	34
6	Insecurity of the country	200	66	33
7	Religious crises	200	26	13
8	High mortality rate	200	36	18
9	Depreciation of natural resource	200	34	17
10	Increase poverty	200	28	14
11	Discourages foreign investment	200	28	14
12	Escalates unemployment	200	26	13
13	High mortality rate among youth	200	26	13

Table 3 indicates that the commonest effects of youth restiveness are upsurge of social vices/crimes in the country with 62% and destruction of lives and properties with 59%. While the least scored is high mortality rate among youths that scored 13%.

Research Question 3: What ways are appropriate curbing youth restiveness in Nigeria?

Table 4: Percentage Scores of Perceived Ways of Curbing Youth Restiveness

S/No	ITEMS	N	F	%
1.	Skill acquisition programme for youths	200	108	56
2.	Enlightenment campaign against youth restiveness	200	106	53
3.	Ensuring that the citizens have formal education	200	104	52
4.	Provision of employment opportunities	200	103	51.5
5.	Neo marginalization of any tribe/ethnic group	200	76	38
6.	Provision of basic social amenities	200	70	35
7.	Restricting of security agents	200	42	21
8.	Adequate parenting of children	200	40	20
9.	Elections should be free and fair at all levels	200	40	20
10.	Religious tolerance	200	38	19
11.	Good governance	200	36	18
12.	Traditional rulers to take charge of their domains	200	32	16
13.	Implementation of school guidance and counselling Services at all levels of education	200	30	15
14.	Giving monthly allowances to unemployed youths	200	30	15
15.	Religious intervention teaching citizens fear of God	200	26	13

Table 4 indicates that providing skill acquisition for youths scored highest with 56% while enlightenment campaigns against youth restiveness ranked second with 53%. However religious intervention scored least with 13.

1.1.4 Discussion of Findings

Research question one identified illiteracy, unequal distribution of natural resources, poor child upbringing, unemployment, poverty among these causes of youth restiveness. Illiteracy among Nigerian youths has been a thing of concern to many citizens. Knowledge and education acquired by individuals most often help them in their levels of patriotism, value orientations and healthy lifestyles. Population Reference Bureau (2006) observed that between 2000-2004 about 30% of Nigerian youths were not enrolled in secondary schools. Hence, the findings agree with Onekpe (2007) assertion that most youths that did not have access to formal education are talks for restiveness.

This finding also agreed with that of Chukwuemeka and Aghara (2010) that incidence of marginalization, denial of social right, environmental degradation and economic devastation activities by the Government of Nigeria had triggered off the irate youths in the Niger Delta region to involve in all sorts of restiveness in demand of their right. This scenario also agreed with the work of Elegbeleye (2005). In the same vein, Ofem and Ajayi (2008) agreed with the findings of research question one that youth restiveness is associated with lack of humanitarian and social welfare, lack of good governance, corrupt practices of government officials, inadequate training programmes, unemployment and lack of quality education. This indicates that causes of youth restiveness are multifaceted in nature. It therefore means that curbing youth restiveness in Nigeria might also take multidimensional approach.

Research question two was on the effects of youth restiveness on Nigerians. The study identified upsurge of social vices and crimes (cultism, kidnapping, armed robbery, hostage, abduction) among others and destruction of lives and properties. Incidences of such seem to be on the increase in our society in recent years. These have also been linked with youths either from Nigeria or neighbouring country Niger. Chukwuemeka and Aghara (2010) agreed that the invasion of the multinational oil companies by restive youths in the Niger Delta, the abduction and kidnapping of foreign nationals working in oil companies, the incessant harassment of traders in Lagos and the every-day-clash in Jos are outcomes of youth restiveness in the country. Increase in unemployment rate was also identified. This definitely might be due to some individuals leaving their business and other jobs relocating from high security risk areas. Such areas of high rate of youth restiveness discourage investors. Zakaria (2006) agrees that youth restiveness increases youth unemployment. He however asserted that the absence of job opportunities in developing countries like Nigeria is responsible for youth restiveness with disastrous consequences.

Research question three sought suggestions on ways of curbing youth restiveness in Nigeria. The study identified skill acquisition programmes, enlightenment campaigns, and formal education among others. Mutiba (2011) affirmed that education is the primary conduit for value formation. While preparation for examinations is afforded priority, value formation, character building, and focusing on building ethical standards in children regrettably are not given adequate emphasis in school curriculum. For formal education to help curb youth restiveness in the country our education has to be modeled towards value inculcation and citizen education at all levels of our education. Our education must be made to be functional meeting the students' needs. More emphasis should be placed on vocational and technical education which will help students acquire skills that will introduce them to entrepreneurship development.

Enlightenment campaigns against youth restiveness are also important. During this period relevant information is disseminated to the citizens. This fact was collaborated by Ifidon and Ahiauzu (2006) who maintained that information is "structured data that causes a human mind to change its opinion about the current state of real world and contribute to a reduction in the uncertainty of the state of the system". Information is therefore is a change agent that will assist the youths change their misconceived ideas and opinions.

Conclusion

Youth restiveness is a social vice that is giving the entire nation sleepless nights. The causes are multifaceted and hence curbing it demands multidimensional approach. The paper believes that effective counselling to youths, parents and political leaders at various levels of governance could go a long way in curbing youth restiveness in Nigeria.

Implications for Counselling

Counselling is a profession 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 manifest as a life style which must be changed if the victims are re-oriented positively. Counselling both in school and non-school setting is capable of doing this hence guidance counsellors at all levels of education can no longer afford to remain indifferent and complacent. They should take interest in counselling youths who are regarded as the hope of tomorrow's adults.

One of the tools that might make positive impact is information service in counseling. Through this service, the guidance counsellor 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 dumb them to their faith. Youths also need information that will get them economically empowered. Hence the guidance counsellor gives them entrepreneurial information that will help them develop skills that can sustain them economically. Such information liberates them from psychological and mental torture they pass through in acts of restiveness.

Group counselling of youths in school and non school settings could also be very helpful. Guidance counsellors could organize workshops, talk shows, and seminars for youths in schools, youth organizations and youths in religious settings. Youths need to be told that the future belongs to them and they should not be used to destroy it. Topics on citizenship education, patriotism, rule of law could be incorporated in such sessions. Such may help them understand their roles in the society better. Such counselling sessions could also be extended to the political elites, leaders at various levels of government and political tugs. Seminars and workshops could be organized for them on good governance.

Assertive training could also be given to the youths at such forum. Since it has been observed that most youths are recruited by politicians and highly placed individuals to act restively in the society, the youths should be equipped with assertive skills in order to be able to say NO to such elders and peers without hurting them. Until youths are able to refuse such enticements of horror, the problem of youth restiveness in this nation may continue.

Cognitive restructuring and behavior modification skills could also be useful in curbing youth restiveness. As professionals, guidance counsellors 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.

One of the outstanding causes of youth restiveness identified in this study is poor child upbringing. This is a challenge to the marriage and family counsellors. Seminars, workshops and group counselling could be organized for parents occasionally. This is to help them understand effective child rearing practices and characteristics peculiar to adolescents and youths and how best to handle such. Since the study also identified overpopulation as one of the perceived causes of youth restiveness, parents could also be counselled on positive effects of having small family size. Topics on reproductive health could also be discussed in such sessions.

Sessions on value re-orientation is also very necessary. Most Nigerian youths seem to believe that the only source of wealth is through resource control and sharing national cake. Such beliefs, values and misconceptions should be re-oriented and replaced with good values of hard work and honesty. Unhealthy lifestyles of cultism, gang formation, drug and alcohol abuse identified in the study as causes of restiveness among youths could be replaced by healthy ones through effective counselling sessions with the youths.

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