

Unemployment and Youth Restiveness in Rivers State: A Review of Port Harcourt Metropolis, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Unemployment is an unwanted social trend and its effects on the aggrieved youth are geared towards crime. This chronic sense of grievance was created by the highly unequal distribution of resources to and within the region exacerbated by negligence on the part of oil multinational companies and government with respect to environmental protection and a failure on the multinational companies to create local employment as well as support local entrepreneurship. This has resulted to the levels of violence driven by criminality, impunity and corruption in the Niger Delta. Despite the attempts made by successive administrations to manage unemployment and youth restiveness in Rivers State, the issue is generating more attention as never before. The social indicators used as a measuring rod of unemployment are crime types that were not existing in the state before now such as kidnapping and hostage taking, pipeline vandalization, youth restiveness to mention a few. To achieve the objectives of this study, Port Harcourt metropolis was divided into four zones namely: Trans-Amadi, Diobu, Borokiri and GRA zones. For easy analyses of data, questionnaire, interview and observational techniques were employed to get the primary data. Three research hypotheses were formulated and questionnaire was developed in line with the research hypotheses and were analysed using z —test of mean based on Likert principle of strongly agreed (SA), Agreed (A), undecided (UD), Strongly Disagreed (SD) and disagreed (D). The researcher recommends that the establishment and funding of skills acquisition centres in all the wards of the state will reduce the pace of violence in Port Harcourt metropolis and Rivers State in general.

Keywords: Unemployment, youth restiveness, kidnapping, Hostage taking, pipeline vandalization.

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 fore-going, 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 Rivers State especially in Port Harcourt metropolis.

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 Rivers State. 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 Rives State. Ndbio (2004) asserts that three youths were reported killed in Bodo city and twelve in Okirika both in Rivers State.

Diegomoah, and Orimalada (1991) described the situation thus:

"...although, the precise magnitude of unemployment and underemployment is unknown. The gravity of the situation can be a gauged act whereas in the 1970s most university graduates were employed within the first three months of graduation. Because of the level of unemployment and youth restiveness in Rivers State, a lot of graduates have decided either to take to crime or go in for post graduate programmes as a way of whiling away time while waiting for job(s)".

However, the issue to overcome unemployment over the years has been Nigeria's greatest problem especially just as the wind of global financial crunch has been so devastating. Various governments have decided to go into several measures in proffering solutions to the global issue. Nigeria.. in a bid to combat youth restiveness has resorted to a massive employment generating schemes such as National Directorate of Employment, creation of the new Ministry of Niger Delta, Rivers State Government Micro loan scheme to

empower rural dwellers, National poverty Eradication programme, skill acquisition programmes. Operation Feed the Nation Programme of 1976 etc.

The concept of unemployment is not a new phenomenon in Nigeria. Thus, in recent years the rate has caused great concern not only to individuals but also to the general public as well as the policy makers. This is because the development purposes are consistently being channeled to curb or curtail the problems created by unemployment in the state, mostly insecurity matters caused by the aggrieved youths, Jhingan (2008).

Occupationally, Rivers State were farmers and fishermen. But because of the activities of multinational oil companies especially oil spillage, most of those primary economic activities are no longer been appreciated. They no longer see most of these businesses as suitable jobs for their social status either as university graduates or oil producing communities, hence they now take to youth restiveness, crime, prostitution and other forms of anti-social ices. Jhingan (opcit).

These youths, with the guise of unemployment have remained a great threat to political stability as they are consistently involved in creating a hostile socio-economic and political environments for the oil industry and government. Armed robbery attacks are persistent, youths forming various gangs of cultism., prostitution and consistent marital instabilities the effects which unemployment has left in its trail.

Related Literature

Unemployment arises when people within the working age who remain without any gainful employment. It is a lack of employment, idleness, involuntary of a person seeking work at a prevailing wage rate, Abadom (1998). Unemployment is a global phenomenon. Over seventy percent of the unemployment cases in Rivers State are fingered to corruption (Ghost Workers Syndrome), Mittee (2006). The payment vouchers are loaded with thousands of names while the actual number of persons working are less.

However, from the above assertion, the problem of unemployment does not only boarder on the less developed economies. The most disturbing feature of unemployment is its high level of dynamism and sophistication. Today, you may solve it, tomorrow it will resurface again. The world economies are passing through this same pain.

In recent times, the scourge of unemployment has resulted to youth restiveness - an anti social violent activities that are been perpetrated by aggrieved youths. It involves brutality, communal clashes, kidnapping, criminality, prostitution and other crimes perpetrated by idle minds.

As Agiobenibo, (1998) puts it:

...youth restiveness in Rivers State has taken a different dimension., as criminals from other neighbouring states come to perpetrate the crime, hiding under the auspices of Niger Delta militias.

Prior to this time, people viewed youth restiveness as a persistent demand or struggle for the liberation of the oil rich region which has suffered long periods of total neglect by past and present administration in the area of granting them their due percentage of the derivation fund, Ecological fund and provision of infrastructural developments. The idle aggrieved youths have taken to crime pointing accusing fingers to unemployment caused by high level of injustices in the Niger Delta, and corrupt politicians etc, Jhingan (2008).

Morestill, is the high pace of youth restiveness to demand for employment in the multinational oil companies in their region, Gbosi (1993). Idle minds in Rivers State prior to this time according to Diejomoah and Orimalada (1991), Falae (1971), and Robinson (2001) committed this crime on subsistence level. Just to take advantage of an ignorant man, but today, militants in the Niger Delta especially in Rivers State have camps and leaders that dialogue constantly with the government. They kidnap and come out from the creeks (hideouts) to collect their ransoms without putting masks on their faces. This is a height of its sophistication.

Momba (1983), Anyanwu (1992) and Angaye (1995) are of the view that:

... youths take to crime and restiveness as the last resort after seeing corrupt politicians looting the nation's wealth with impunity. Youths graduate and stay at home as much as five, six or even several years without jobs. Therefore, they see criminality as the only way to break the vicious circle of poverty in their families.

Anyanwu (1992) asserts that:

Since youths are the leaders of tomorrow, then the prevailing high cost of living and corruption in the country, justifies their restiveness.

Millions of Nigerian youths have taken crime to be a hobby, for example, following the statements of some aggrieved youths during the bound on Okada early this year by the Rt. Honourable Chibuike Amaechi led administration. Most motor-cyclist popularly called Okada made open provocative statements that if the government goes ahead to bound the use of Okada in Port Harcourt, they will take to crime as the only way-out. This implies that some Nigerian youths are not even willing to engage themselves in any economic activity or

take advantage of the laudable economic programmes of the present administration in Rivers State such as the sustainable Development Programme (Micro Finance Loan).

Methodology

In this study, survey research design was used. A survey research is one in which a group of items are studied by collecting and analyzing data from a few people or items considered to be a representative of the entire group. Port Harcourt metropolis (the case study) was divided into four zones namely Trans Amadi, Diobu, Borokiri and Govern Reserved Area (GRA) Zones. Questionnaire, interviews and observational techniques were employed.

A total of 1,200 questionnaire were therefore dispensed across each zones at 300 copies per zone. On the whole, a total of one thousand (1000) copies were properly filled and returned. Three hypotheses were formulated and tested using z-test of means.

Research Hypotheses

In order to achieve the objectives of this study, the following hypotheses were posed.

- i. There is a significant relationship between unemployment and youth restiveness in Port Harcourt metropolis.
- ii. There is a significant relationship between youth restiveness socio-economic under-development in the state.
- iii. There is a significant relationship between corrupt politicians looting state fund without impunity and youths' involvement in crime, kidnapping and hostage taking as a means of breaking their vicious circle of poverty in their families perpetuated by unemployment of the youths in the area.

Data Analysis

Hypothesis 1

There is a significant relationship between unemployment and youths restiveness in Port Harcourt metropolis.

To test this hypothesis, certain items of our questionnaire were use, based on the Likert scale of Strongly Agreed (SA), Agreed (A) Undecided (UD) Strongly Disagreed (SD) and Disagreed (D).

Table 1.1 Unemployment and Youth restiveness

Item Description	SA 5	A 4	UD 3	SD 2	D 1	TOTAL RESPONSES
Item 5	50	50	100	200	600	1000
Item 6	50	70	180	300	400	1000
Item 7	40	60	100	400	400	1000
Item8	50	100	50	600	200	1000
Frequency	190	280	430	1500	1600	4000
∑ Ranks x frequency	950	1120	1290	3000	1600	7960

Z –test formula

$$\begin{aligned}
 zt &= \frac{\sum Ranks \times frequency}{Total Responses (n)} \\
 &= \frac{7960}{4000} \\
 &= 1.99 \\
 zt &= 2
 \end{aligned}$$

Decision Rule - Accept the hypothesis, if the computed value is greater than the critical (table) value. Otherwise reject it. Based on the above, we accept the hypothesis which state that there is a significant relationship between unemployment and youth restiveness in Port Harcourt Metropolis. This confirms the work of Jhingan (2008) who asserts that:

... idle aggrieved youths have taken to crimes and youth restiveness pointing accusing fingers to unemployment...

Our respondent who were interviewed also blamed it on the high level of unemployed graduates roaming the streets, especially in such oil region like Niger Delta.

The researcher has subscribed to unemployment as the engine-room for youth restiveness because an idle man as they say is the devil’s workshop. Based on the above analysis, and the subsequent literature, it is clear indeed that unemployment is the energizing fulcrum of youth restiveness in Port Harcourt metropolis.

Having been done with the first hypothesis, let us advance to the second.

Hypothesis II

There is a significant relationship between youth restiveness and rural socio-economic underdevelopment in the state.

Certain items of our questionnaire were used to answer this hypothesis. The following results were obtained based on what transpired in the field on Likert scale of strongly agreed (SA), Agreed (A), undecided (UD) Strongly Disagreed (SD) and Disagreed (D)

Table 1.2: Youth restiveness and socio-economic under-development

Item Description	SA 5	A 4	UD 3	SD 2	D 1	TOTAL RESPONSES
Item 9	50	70	180	200	500	1000
Item 10	50	100	50	600	200	1000
Item 11	50	50	100	200	600	1000
Frequency	150	220	330	1000	1300	3000
∑ Ranks x frequency	750	880	990	2000	1300	5320

Ztest formula

$$\frac{\sum Ranks \times frequency}{Total Responses (n)}$$

$$= \frac{5320}{3000}$$

$$= 1.77$$

zt = 2

Decision Rule - Accept the hypothesis, if the computed value is greater than the table (critical) value. Otherwise reject it. Based on the above analysis, we accept the hypothesis which state that there is a significant relationship between youth restiveness and rural socio-economic under-development in the state. This work conforms to the work of Angaye (1995) who asserts that:

... youths are irritated because of the high level of unemployment in the region, coupled with the long neglect of socio-economic development in the rural area...

Some of the respondents who were interviewed supported the youth restiveness in the region. The following conversation ensued between me (the researcher) and an elderly man (Iboroma) (my respondent) from Okirika.

Researcher - Sir for some time now, Port Harcourt metropolis and Rivers State in general has been living in fear of militants and youth restiveness. Can you, please assess the extent of success the youths have achieved?

Respondent - Come my son, look at our youths roaming about in Port Harcourt without employment. These are graduates from university o!. Our roads are bad and rural areas are not

Researcher - No, but what is the problem?

Respondent - John, please come (John is his son who lives in Minna (Northern State). My son (referring to me) John told me that the Northern States of Nigeria are like heaven. Good roads, good school environments and infrastructural facilities, whereas there are no oil wells in the North. They use our oil money from the Niger Delta to develop their states. Why can’t the youths be angry?

Researcher - What are the prospects of peace in Port Harcourt and Niger Delta in general, on the face of this staggering youth restiveness?

Respondent - For there to be peace, this injustice must first of all be redressed because nobody came into this world to be another man’s slave. Whoever is going to the altar of equity, at least, should go there with clean hands. We can no longer tolerate this situation.

What baffled us in the field was that most of the respondents we interviewed claimed they are from under developed rural areas and they also have Sons and daughters who are unemployed in the face of rich oil

Niger Delta region. Why can't these youths be employed by the multinational companies in their host communities was our major worry in the field.

Based on this analysis and subsequent literature, it has been established that there is a significant relationship between youth restiveness aid rural socio-economic under development in the state. We shall therefore proceed to analyse the third hypothesis.

Hypothesis III

There is a significant relationship between corrupt politicians looting State fund with impunity and youths involvement in crime, kidnapping and M4k. ting as a means of breaking the vicious circle of poverty in their families perpetuated by unemployment of the youths in the area.

To analyse this hypothesis, certain items are used from the questionnaire. The following results were obtained based on Likert scale of Strongly Agreed (SA), Agreed (A), undecided (UD) strongly agreed (SD) and Disagreed (D).

Table 1.3: Corruption Politicians and Youth involvement in crime

Item Description	SA 5	A 4	UD 3	SD 2	D 1	TOTAL RESPONSES
Item 12	50	50	100	200	600	1000
Item 13	50	100	50	600	200	1000
Item 14	40	60	100	400	400	1000
Item 15	50	70	180	300	400	1000
Frequency	190	280	430	1500	1600	4000
∑ Ranks x frequency	750	1120	1290	3000	1600	7960

Ztest formula

$$\frac{\sum Ranks \times frequency}{Total Responses (n)}$$

$$= \frac{7960}{4000} = 1.99$$

zt = 2

Decision Rule – Accept the hypothesis if the computed value is greater than the critical (table) value. Otherwise reject it. Based on the above analysis, we accept the hypothesis which state that there is a significant relationship between corrupt politician looting state fund with impunity and youths involvement in crime, kidnapping and hostage taking as a means of breaking the vicious circle of poverty in their families perpetuated by unemployment of the youths in the area.

This supports the works of Momba (1983), Anyanwu (1992) and Angaye (1995) who asserts that:
... youths take to crime and restiveness as the last resort after seeing corrupt politicians looting state fund with impunity...

Some of our respondents who were interviewed supported the restiveness of the youths as an option to survive. Although, the researcher did not subscribe to restiveness as an option rather that the youths instead of kidnapping and hostage taking and other forms of criminality should cultivate new interests and make positive adjustments of their lives. After all people also make it in life honestly and God fearing.

Based on this analysis and subsequent literature it is clear that the activities of these corrupt politician looting state funds and enriching themselves also irritate the youths to react the way they do in order to break the vicious circle of poverty of their families.

Findings

The researcher in course of this work, made the following observations:

1. Youths in the Niger Delta and Port Harcourt in particular are really in a serious business of kidnapping and hostage taking, robbery, militancy etc to protest theft unemployment.
2. Governments are spending more on insecurity of the state caused by the restive youths of the region.
3. There are officials of the government who are accomplice to this crime of kidnapping and hostage taking. Especially as the militants now kidnap and come for negotiations with the government based on expectant percentages from the handouts.

4. These corrupt officials know how much they force government to pay as to enable them have theft own share. Otherwise, why should a militant who has come for negotiation with the government over kidnapped expatriate(s) not be arrested and prosecuted or even killed.

Recommendations

The researcher, therefore in course of this work and to save Port Harcourt metropolis from total collapse, made the following suggestions:-

1. There should be the establishment of skills acquisition centres in all the wards in the state as to reduce the pace of violence.
2. Multinational companies in the area should lay more emphasis on labour intensive rather than capital intensive. This would help for the employment of manual labourers.
3. Government should provide infrastructural facilities in the rural areas to reduce the pace of rural-urban migration. Infrastructural development may make the youths to be self-reliant.
4. Government should provide loans to turners in the rural areas to motivate them.
5. Sports development should be encouraged, especially at the grass root so as to keep the youths' mind busy from crime.
6. Religious leaders should redirect their programmes to carry the youths along.
7. Citing of more police stations or posts in the rural areas will equally reduce the pace of crime and violence.
8. The issue of tackling unemployment should be collective and not to be left in the hands of only the government.

Conclusion

This work has provided a dependable platform to suitably argue that unemployment does exist in Niger Delta and Rivers State in particular. We have taken an indept look at unemployment and youth restiveness in Port Harcourt metropolis and considered the theoretical stand points of various academic authorities.

The hypotheses tested justified significant relationships with the variables tested because it was discovered that since an idle mind is the devils workshop as they say, youths then decided to move into restiveness or social unrest on full time basis as a way of redressing the situation.

It is obvious that no economy of the world can completely tackle the issue of unemployment, hence it needs collaborated efforts of the private sector too as to ensure that the issue of youth restiveness becomes a thing of the past cw be reduced to the bearest minimum.

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