

CAPACITY BUILDING AS A TOOL FOR COMBATING YOUTH RESTIVENESS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper examined capacity building as a tool for combating youth restiveness in Nigeria. Socio economic factors affecting youth restiveness were discussed. After the analysis of the effects of youth restiveness, suggestions were made towards addressing the problem. The problem of unemployment should be taken seriously by the government at all levels. The unemployment reduction strategies of the community should be implemented appropriately to curb youth restiveness and communal clashes in the communities. It is suggested that government should focus on retaining on smaller, well-targetschemes for recognizable areas of skill shortage and working-for-yourselfprogrammes-capable strategies to solve or reduce the rate of unemployment among youth to the bearest minimum. This in turn will drastically reduce youth restiveness. In addition, government should improve capacity building and create job opportunities, to increase the rate of employment among youths in the society, which will reduce restiveness among the youth in the society. Besides, government should intensify efforts to promote training programmes and small scale businesses of these communities to complement the unemployment reduction strategies.

Introduction

Nigeria is a country characterized by acute community clashes and youth restiveness, with nihilistic effects on peace. Youth restiveness in particular has reached an alarming proportion in Nigeria. The nation has recorded very bizarre experiences in the area of youth restiveness. According to Adeyemi (2021), youth restiveness cuts across various acts such as murder, ethnic violence, communal clashes, religious uprisings, party clashes, cult clashes, shooting, stabbing, kidnaping for ransom, armed robbery, including armed bank robbery, theft, burglary, rape, rioting especially against government policies, vandalism, ethnic militancy and so on.

It is a truism that communal clashes have been particularly associated with the violent activities of youth in the past years. Elaborating on this, Akinola (2019) observed that youths constitute the bulk of ethnic clashes in the society. For instance, the Oodua People's Congress (OPC) is believed to be a youth militant arm of NADECO/Afenifere, a pan Yoruba national political association, meant to oppose the military junta and press for the realization of the Yoruba mandate (Ishola, 2018). The Bakassi Boys are made up of youths who live under self-denial of many things like women, certain foods and certain interaction etc, while Egbesu Boys of Africa as it is otherwise called, represents the militant wing of Ijaw Youth Council (IYC). Egbesu boys and other Ijaw youth groups have engaged in series of hostage-taking of oil workers, oil bunkering and cult clashes in the Niger Delta region (Suleiman, 2020).

In fact, in a society suffering from prolonged conflict (religious, ethnic or communal), the integrating of cultures (people, customs, mores) through capacity building seems to be a hopeful and lasting initiative for conflict resolution. Ife and Modakeke are neighboring communities in Osun State, Nigeria, which have engaged in protracted communal violence and intra-ethnic conflict. Asiyabola (2017) asserted that so far, there had been seven major wars

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between the Ifes and Modakekes, that is- 1835-1849, 1882-1909, 1946-1949, 1981, 1983, 1997-1998, and 2000. Based on this, the conflict appears to be the oldest intra-ethnic conflict in Nigeria because it has been going on for more than a century. Also, Augsburg (2017) and Omotayo (2015) concluded that the conflict has become its own *raison d'être*; its own self-empowered, and self-fulfilling, as it had since detached from its original cause.

Conceptual Review

Capacity Development is a conceptual approach to development that focuses on understanding the obstacles that inhibit people, governments, international organizations and non-governmental organizations from realizing their developmental goals while enhancing the abilities that will allow them to achieve measurable and sustainable results. The term capacity building emerged in the lexicon of international development during the 1990s. Today, "capacity building" is included in the programs of most international organizations that work in development, the World Bank (World Bank), The United Nations (UN) and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) like Oxfam International. Wide usage of the term has resulted in controversy over its true meaning. Capacity building often refers to strengthening the skills, competencies and abilities of people and communities in developing societies so they can overcome the causes of their exclusion and suffering. Organizational capacity building is used by NGOs to guide their internal development and activities (<http://www.unep.org>, 2010).

Restiveness according to Abdullahi (2021) is self-generating theory of conflict process within social groups. He further stated that any restive acts of groups whether inter or intra in nature in contemporary history of Nigeria is synonymous with conflict. Intra group restiveness or conflict occurs when there is a competition for an interest (Iyamu, 2019). Youth restiveness is the omnibus term for a host of anti-social, and sometimes, downright criminal behaviours perpetrated by a sizeable proportion of youth in various communities around Nigeria. As the name implies, it is a combination of any action or conduct that constitutes unwholesome, socially unacceptable and unworthy activities of the youths in any community. As a virulent threat to peace, youth restiveness always leads to a near breakdown of law and order, low productivity due to disruption of production activities, apparent increase in crime rates, intra-ethnic hostilities, harassment of prospective developers and other sundry criminal tendencies (Arase & Iwu 2016).

Causes of Youth Restiveness

Apparently, the source of this explosion in youth population can be traced to the so-called oil boom of the 70s during which period our people began to bring forth off-springs recklessly with the perception that everything will continue to be rosy and that things were never going to be as bad. Apparently, this is partly why we have the challenge of providing, infrastructure and social services that would have to meet this population. Yet, our economy does not seem to be meeting these challenges. So in this population of youths, we have a small group of them that have access to formal education and a larger majority that could not access formal education and therefore possess no marketable skills (Dempsey & Forst, 2015).

The causes of youth restiveness are legion ranging from individual to societal factors. The causes continue to widen everyday though just as the sophistication of the means through which the perpetrators thrive this condemnable act, appear to be ever changing. However, there appears to be a general consensus that youths tend to resort to restiveness due to a number of reasons viz.

Perceived Marginalization: The notion appears to have gained ground that the youths resort to restiveness because of their perceived marginalization by the selfish elders and leaders in the community. To get attention, partake in, or get their “share”, they resort to confrontation with these community leader sculminating in the rampant threats to communal harmony in the better part of the country today (Uthman, 2019).

Poverty: The problem of poverty apparently accounts for the bulk of youth restiveness in many parts of the country. The imperative growth in the nation's GDP has not translated to reduction in the number of citizens living below poverty line. Indeed, 55 percent of the populations live on less than one dollar per day, one of the highest poverty rates in Sub-Saharan Africa(Uthman, 2019). With an annual population growth of about 2.5 percent, the GDP growth rate is grossly insufficient to alleviate poverty, one of Nigeria's most pressing problems (USAID 2006:13). Martins (2021) sees poverty as a form of disembowelment that can be viewed from three dimensions: socio-economic, political and psychological.

Unemployment: The youths constitute a large army of the unemployed. Therefore, there is a tendency for them to look at their plight as the making of acruel society that does not seem to care for them. Since the society places high premium on wealth and honours those who have “made it’ a strong negativefeeling of dissent drives the youth to rebel against society. In consonance with this, the availability of drugs on street comers, predispose the youth to drugs use and deviant behaviours. Frustrated youths naturally see violence as an instrument of inter-group relations.

Arms racing: The ready availability of arms and their use has generatedcycles of violence where both civilians need to defend themselves and where various armed groups see the necessity of acquiring more and more arms to protect themselves or to launch attacks. This is leading to the militarization of security and also a demand for more and more powerful and sophisticated weapons in order to keep up or maintain some form of parity.

Family violence: Wife betting and child battering have a multiplier effect on the cycle of violence in any society. Children living in violent homes are themselves more likely to become agents of violence as they grow up to youth. They naturally see violence as an instrument of inter-group relations. It is also possible for the frequently battered mother to transfer her suffering to her children in the form of harsh punishment for minoroffences. Such children soon become resistant to even dangerous battering and gladly participate in street fights. They become threats to societal peace and harmony as they are recruited into gangster organizations, especially if they are unrestricted by exposed to violent films. Development of delinquent gangs can also be explained from the perspective of inadequate parental guidance. In cities like Lagos and Ibadan, most husbands and wives are gainfully employed in cities and they pay less attention to the children. Such children could readily be socialized into violent life styles and restiveness.

Dimension and Threats of Youth Restiveness in Nigeria

In the context of Nigeria's historical experience, youth and students have rendered valuable contributions to the struggle for liberation and national development. They can constitute a reservoir of energy and dynamism for any national struggle or campaign if they are correctly guided, mobilized, and fully integrated into the social fabrics of the nation. They may also constitute a threatto national survival and stability if they are allowed to drift, are unemployed, undisciplined and morally bankrupt. No nation aspiring to major national greatness

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can afford to ignore the youths and allow them to constitute a major social problem. They are a vital source of manpower and do possess leadership potentials, can acquire knowledge, and are full of future promises.

There is now a national crisis on the youth front. Youth are now perceived largely as a problem popularly described as youth restiveness. There are categories in the consideration of youth question:

First, the national dimension is reflected in formal bodies such as OPC, Arewa Youth, MASSCB, Egbesu Boys of Africa etc. these are publicly acknowledged bearers of structured political and economic agendas of geo-ethnic divisions.

Second, there is also a rise in organized youth delinquencies in Nigerian cities today, popularly known as “area boys” resident mostly in Lagos. They have a neo-gang structure and specific city turfs where they operate and defend against rival groups.

Third, there are a number of smaller youth associations in the states, local governments and towns across the country today. This type is without any explicit political agenda, but focuses more on their welfare concerns.

Fourth, there is emergence of cult gangs on campuses which has facilitated the assimilation and subsumption of students in the inclusive category of Nigeria youth. It is the violent restiveness of the youth, which announces their presence in the public mind. Campus cults share in this attribute.

Fifth, there is an increase in the number of youth who flee the country through illegitimate means in order to make a living in other countries. Global networks facilitate this physical flight of both male and female youth, as well as child labour smuggling (Uthman, 2019).

From 1999 youth restiveness in Nigeria took a new dimension. The new form of militancy and restiveness include, kidnaping of foreign oil workers, kidnaping of top notchers in government and those supporting government, arson, assassination, and other forms of gruesome murder. The degree of youth involvement in violent activities in Nigeria can be further understood through the following incidences identified by Suleiman (2020):

On 31st May 1999, Ijaw and Itsekiri militias engaged in violent clash in Warri town, Delta State. The violent conflict erupted over the Olu of Warri throne and recognition. In October 1999, OPC attacked Ijaw Itsekiri Urhobo indigenes (Egbesu) in Ajegunle Lagos over disagreement between residents and vigilante (OPC). On 8th November 1999, Egbesu group killed a policeman in Odi. The main cause of the incident was the kidnaping and killing of policemen by Egbesu youth in retaliation for the killing of their member. The Federal government later deployed soldiers who killed and ransacked the town of Odi in Bayelsa State.

On 16th November 1999, several people died in a bloody communal clash between Oleh and Olomuro communities in Delta state over the sharing of pipes already used from the Oleh Olomuro flow station. On 20th January 2000, Mr. Afolabi Amao, a DPO of Bariga police station died in OPC bloody clash with police in Bariga, Lagos. On 16th May, 2000, a bloody ethnic feud between Akasa and Igwama communities in Bayelsa state claimed many lives on both sides. Ethnic crises championed by the youth, which resulted in killing each other, caused the ethnic feud.

On 1st May 2003, Ijaw militias attacked government forces and oil installation in Opumani Tank Farm, Okerenkoko Delta. On 2nd May, 2003, Ijaw militia attacked government forces and oil installation in Effurun, Ubeji Delta. On 30th April 2003, women were killed in crossfire between the Ijaw militias and Nigeria security agents. The security agents intervened

when the Ijaw militias opened fire on an Itsekiri town, killing five women. On 25th April, 2003, the attacked on Navy and Army by Ijaw militias left ten dead in Warri, Delta; their radio communication intercepted. On 12th June, 2002 about 15 people were killed and many injured when youth militias of Ozoro and Okpanla communities clashed in Isoko, Delta state.

On 18th January, 2002, some people were killed and many injured in Awecrisis in Nasarawa, old feud among two communities in the local government was re-echoed as youth militia raided and killed people indiscriminately.

On 29th October, 2001, 19 soldiers were killed by the Tiv militias in Tiv/Junkun Taraba, Benue in an escalation of ethnic feud between Tiv-Junkun and Fulani conflict. On 16th May, 2000, a bloody ethnic feud between Akasa and Igwama communities in Bayelsa state claimed many lives on both sides, ethnic crisis championed by the youth which resulted in killing each other caused the ethnic feud. In early hours of Sunday, February 23rd, the Hausa/Fulani youths, were mobilized via a powerful loudspeaker to attack the people they described as Kafir (i.e. infidels). The attack led to the reprisal killing of Muslims in Yelwa in May (Abuh, 2004), At Yelwa, Shendam, the levels of destruction during February 22nd and May 2nd incidents are unprecedented and colossal. Houses, Churches, mosques, shops, public buildings were torched. The Yelwa violence also led to the reprisal killings in Kano of Christians and non-Indigenes by the Muslim youths. In the three days bloody violence, more than 40 people were officially reported dead several individuals injured and over 30,000 displaced, property valued at billions of naira were either touched, vandalized or looted by the rioters who employed all manner of dangerous weapons during the attack. In July 26th, 2009, 800 people were reported killed in the Boko Haram violence in Maiduguri, Yobe, Bauchi and Kano States. Similarly, at least 200 persons were killed and many others seriously injured in a religious crisis in Bauchi State (Suleiman, 2020).

It is important to state that youth restiveness has led to colossal waste in terms of human and material resources. With the above record of violence, thousands of people mostly youth have been killed, many injured, and property worth millions of naira destroyed. The incidents have also drained the state treasury because government often compensates the victims of urban-related violence. Today the consequences of youth restiveness stare us in the face as they are short and long term. Whichever way, the truth is that youth restiveness and social vices are devastating both to the individual and the society. No doubt, youth restiveness makes the youth to be disabled for their expected role as leaders of tomorrow. They destroy productive lives, potentials, future as well as the social fabrics of the society. In fact the risks involved are too numerous to be taken for granted. So, it remains a condemnable and unacceptable phenomenon. It is therefore our responsibility to take care of all those who have some skills and those who could not. We have to look for ways of bringing this large army of unemployed youths into the mainstream of society and make them economically and socially viable so that they can become creators of jobs and wealth for themselves and others. Unless we are able to do this, significantly, the consequences may be too great for our communities, society and the nation at large.

Conclusion and Suggestions

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are hereby made towards effective reduction and control of youth restiveness in Nigeria. The problem of unemployment should be taken seriously by the government at all levels. The unemployment reduction strategies of the community should be implemented appropriately to curb youth

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restiveness and communal clashes in the communities. It is suggested that government should focus on retaining on smaller, well-target schemes for recognizable areas of skill shortage and working-for-yourself programmes-capable strategies to solve or reduce the rate of unemployment among youth to the dearest minimum. This in turn will drastically reduce youth restiveness.

In addition, government should improve capacity building and create job opportunities, to increase the rate of employment among youths in the society, which will reduce restiveness among the youth in the society. Besides, government should intensify efforts to promote training programmes and small scale businesses of these communities to complement the unemployment reduction strategies.

Government security agents especially the police should be well motivated towards combating youth restiveness and communal clashes while community policing should be more encouraged. There is also the need for community and religious leaders to play more roles in reducing youth restiveness and frequent outbreak of communal clashes.

Finally, government at all levels and the non-governmental organizations should focus more attention on youth empowerment and intensify their campaigns against restiveness. It is the submission of this researcher that, if all these recommendations are implemented, the problem of youth restiveness and communal clashes between Ifa and Modakeke communities will be drastically reduced or eliminated.

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