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PSYCHOLOGICAL STRATEGIES FOR MINIMIZING YOUTH RESTIVENESS: IMPLICATIONS FOR NATIONAL SECURITY

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Abstract

This paper delved on psychological strategies for minimizing youth restiveness and their implication on national security. The conceptual definitions of youth, restiveness, youth restiveness, and national security have been provided in the paper. The causes of youth restiveness which include poor governmental policies, lack of access to quality and functional education, decay in infrastructural facilities, lack of job opportunities, poor standard of living, and absence of communication network have been discussed. The paper has also analyzed the psychological strategies for minimizing youth restiveness in the society. These include use of cognitive behavioural therapy, provision of positive reinforcement, mindfulness meditation, self-regulation techniques, groupcounselling methods, parental involvement, social support, role modeling, and community engagement. The paper has further discussed the implications of youth restiveness on national security which includes increased criminal activities, uncertainty or anxiety, economic sabotage, underdevelopment, agitation and rebelliousness, and cybercrimes. The paper has recommended provision of quality and functional education through basic education and literacy programmes, establishment of skill acquisition centres, job creation through infrastructural development, people oriented economic policies for improved standard of living, and value re-orientation, among others.

Key words: Psychological Strategies, Youth Restiveness, and National Security

Introduction

In every society, youthfulness is a very important stage. The roles of youths are very crucial and many to include maintenance of law and order, preservation of societal norms and culture, promoting knowledge, partaking in communal activities, politics, and developing projects, as well as participating in cultural festivals and sports events. However, it is a fundamental truth that no society thrives and progresses significantly with a restive population of youths who are prone to violence, unrest, wanton destruction and involvement in social vices. Youth restiveness has become one of the greatest security challenges confronting Nigeria particularly in the 21st century. The menace has posed serious threats to the human development and corporate existence of the country across different parts of the country with significant effects on social, psychological, political, economic, and educational spheres of our lives. The activities of insurgency in the North-East, which is anchored by boko-haram group, the illegal activities of young persons under the wings of Odua People's Congress (OPC) and the incessant kidnapping and conflicts involving armed youths in the Niger Delta area are all manifestations of youth restiveness; breeding colossal loss of lives, inflicting pains and agony among people.

Though youth restiveness in Nigeria is not a new phenomenon, it patterns and manifestations cuts across different parts of the country with dooms in varying degrees. According to Elegbeleye (2005) and Johnson (2018), youth resistance to conditions, issues and unwelcomed leadership regimes in Nigeria 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. Equally, in the close of 1950s to mid-1960s, political parties such as the National Council for Nigerian Citizens (NCNC), the Northern People's Congress (NPC), and the Action Group (AG) involved the youth in perpetrating coordinated political protests and unrests. This phenomenon metamorphosed to the use of larger proportion of youths in different protests and counter-protests across Nigeria. For instance, in the South-West region, there is Odua People's Congress (OPC), in the South-East region, there is the fierce Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereignty State of Biafra (MASSOB), in the South-South, there is Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) and the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP).Similarly, the World dreaded insurgent group, Boko Haram in the North-Eastern part of Nigeria has vast members majority of who are youths (Esere, Ajiboye, & Adebayo, 2015). In addition, the proliferation of youth legal and illegal associations such as students' union and cults have turned learning institutions to danger haven where rioting, vandalism,

unrest, looting, arson and violation of human rights are perpetrated as a result of youth restiveness. Although several research findings have recommended various measures as ways of curbing these forms of restiveness, this paper considered psychological strategies imperative so as to tame the tie.

Conceptual Framework

The concept of youth is considered asa period of change from the reliance of childhood to adulthood, which has freedom of being aware of the need to work with other members of the society to help achieve the aims and objectives of the society (United Nations Youth, 2019). Youth is a period of life when the individualis young or the state of being young (Cambridge Dictionary, 2019). In other words, youth is a phase or transition from dependence to independence (Nsidibe et al. 2017). Youth is described as a person who has not attained the status of adulthood. , while restive suggested when one is unable to be still or quiet, difficult to control, especially when not satisfied with something (Okwum, 2009). Since youth have natural endowment of raw energy which results to bubbling in spirit, having high hopes, big dreams, aspirations and ideas of what the future owes them, they are not naturally calm but are anxious and anticipate to know what present situation has to offer in order to fast track their future. Thus, a disappointment or even misconception on their part usually triggers the standby propensity for violence and more often to restiveness.

Youth restiveness, on the other hand,is viewed as a combination of actions, conduct and behaviour by young people that constitute unwholesome and socially unacceptable response to situations by the youths in the society. Such actions could be in form of sustained protests and agitation to enforce a desired outcome (Elegbeleye, 2005&Yusuf,2014)). In this sense, youth restiveness has become a device used by young persons to obtain what they want from relevant authorities. Youth restiveness is a deliberate instrument of organized response to perceived grievances that have an increasing potency and capacity for destruction (Babayeju, 2015). Ukwueze (2013) described youth restiveness as a function of one's emotional and temperamental reactions to events or situations, due to wrong cognitive perception, appraisal and interpretation of such events with resultant state of nervousness, restlessness, uneasiness, obstinacy and uncontrollable behaviour. Thus, youth restiveness encompasses all forms of youth activisms that pose or have the tendency of posing threat to the orderliness andsecurity of life and property.

National security refers to the protection and preservation of a nation's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the well-being of its citizens from external and internal threats, encompassing political, economic, military, and societal dimensions (Johnson, 2018).National security refers to the strategic framework and collective efforts a nation employs to protect its sovereignty, citizens, and essential interests from an array of internal and external threats. It encompasses measures aimed at maintaining political stability, social cohesion, economic prosperity, and cultural identity, all while safeguarding against challenges such as military aggression, terrorism, cyber-attacks, environmental crises, and economic vulnerabilities (Ball, 2017).

Nigeria is facing numerous national security threats, including terrorism, banditry, inter-communal conflicts, and the activities of criminal networks. These security challenges have resulted in the displacement of millions of Nigerians, continuous loss of lives, and significant economic losses that require measures to combat the threats. Since restiveness deals with perception and our interpretation of actions and behaviour, psychological strategies are mental processes designed to stimulate and calm our brain to reduce anxiety and frustration in life. In other words, psychological strategies are measures meant to increase brain relaxation, build self-confidence, and positive self-disclosure to tackle stressors and distress so as to achieve a state of equilibrium and well-being in life. In this context, applying psychological strategies would assist youths to mitigate the strains and pressure of life which arises as a result of distorted thoughts, stress, and maladjustment, which subsequently, will lead to peace and tranquility.

Causes of Youth Restiveness

The causes of youth restiveness are numerous. It is disturbing that most youths do not want to take up responsibilities anymore. They always look for the easy way out which is usually unlawful and unprofitable. In the past, most youths were seen to be involved in farm work, trading, helping out in house chores and other decent task.

1. **Poor Governmental Policies**: Poor government policies in this context refer to those policies that are inefficient in improving the assets and capabilities of the people. (Kazeem, 2017). When a government policy is not favourable to a people, it tends to breed opposition from the masses because they feel oppressed and neglected. According to Oromareghake et al. (2013), “the escalating state of violence between the Niger Delta youth and the Nigeria Government is that of the politics of access to the oil

fund". There is need for the government to study her masses and find out their pressing needs and ensure that people oriented programmes and policies are executed to creating opportunities for the citizens to meet their needs, aspirations and demands.

2. **Poor access to Quality and Functional Education**: This refers to the inability of the school-aged population to access quality and functional education. Quality education plays a vital role in the growth, development and stability of a country. According to Word press (2014), quality education has a direct bearing on national prestige, greatness, and cohesion. The basic knowledge for the human capital development is acquired through the attainment of educational goals. The problem with the Nigeria educational system today is absence of infrastructural facilities, lack equipment, and lack of quality teachers which lead to production of half-beck school leavers. Also, most youths in the rural areas do not go to school because they cannot meet the financial obligation to attain their educational needs. The irony of these is that those that graduate still find it difficult to get jobs. This further encompasses the problems of their families and the youth. The government and the masses must work as one to ensure that investments in education are promoted in the country to cub the menace of insecurity.
3. **Poor Infrastructural Facilities:** Inadequate or insufficient infrastructural facilitieshinder effective implementation of programmesand services to the citizens. These facilities include unequipped buildings, inadequate transportation, limited accommodation, poor electricity supply and dilapidated roads(Rueda, 2019). Lack of facilities occurred as a result of unequal distribution of the national resources, and misappropriation and mismanagement of funds public funds. Poor infrastructure result intodecay in educational facilities, unclean water, bad roads, poor electricity supply, and lack of access to medical facilities, amongst others. Consequently, struggle for survival in accessing the limited facilities lead to youth restiveness.
4. **Lack of Job Opportunity:** Lack of job simplyrefers to a situation of being without a job that will earn one a living (Onuba, 2019). In Nigeria today, the growing rate of unemployment is alarming. According to National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2021), Nigeria's unemployment rate has increased to 33:30 percent in the fourth quarter of 2020 from 27:10 percent in the second quarter of 2020. The labour statistics report released by the National Bureau of Statistics showed that the number of Nigerians that unemployed has increased enormously; leading tomany Nigerian youth trapped by unemployment.

Zakaria (2006) strongly believed that the absence of job opportunities in developing countries is responsible for youth restiveness with disastrous consequences. Government has not put in enough functional structure in place to provide jobs for the masses. There is the need for government to be involved in home made goods and ensuring that there are local industries around where youths can be employed while revenues will also be generated for the country. This will help engage the youths and curb idleness that would have ordinarily led to evil vices and undesirable agitation.

5. **Poor Standard of Living:**Poor standard of living implies a low quality of life due to lack of necessities and luxuries that makes life easier (Moskowitz, 2019). There is a connection between poverty, unemployment, discrimination, and youth restiveness in relation to violence by youth towards the Nigeria government. The gap between the rich and the poor is wide. The poor feels dejected, oppressed, dehumanized and segregated. This tendency makes the youth to be involved in criminal activities that will bring funds to them and their families, no matter the consequences. Today, the cases of internet fraudsters (yahoo boys), deceitful activities (419), kidnapping and ritual activities are on the increase as a result of poor standard of living which are detrimental to national security.
6. **PoorInformation and Communication Network:** Information is vital in taking crucial and important decision in the course of pursuing livelihood. Poor information and communication network can be very detrimental to decision making process as well as mislead the youth for making wrong decision. Thus, the cause of youth restiveness in the society occurs as a result of false information through social media which make the youth aggressive and partake in violent protest. The studies of Hidon and Ahiauzu (2005) in Niger Delta revealed that lack of communication and insufficient information flow led to youth restiveness. Therefore, Lack of communication, inadequate and wrong information can lead to emergence of youth restiveness.

Psychological Strategies for Minimizing Youth Restiveness

There are several psychological strategies that could be adopted to minimize youth restiveness for a secured nation. They include:

1. **Cognitive-behavioral Therapy (CBT):**This is a form of psychotherapy that focuses on the connection between thoughts, behaviours, and emotions.It is a goal oriented and systematic approach that aims to change dysfunctional emotions, behaviors and cognition.The CBT is

used in resolving various mental disorders, including mood disorders, substance use disorders and psychotic disorders(Jessica, 2021).This therapy helps young people develop positive coping mechanisms, improve their problem-solving skills, and manage their emotions more effectively to avoid feelings of restiveness. Professional counsellors 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 for achieving peace and sustainable development (Igbo & Innocent, 2013).

2.Mindfulness Meditation: Mindfulness meditation in psychology refers to the practice of cultivating focused attention and regulating emotional states through the attitudinal foundations of non-judgment and acceptance (Ruchika, 2021). It involves engaging in mindfulness practices to improve cognitive, affective, and brain functions and activities. Research has shown that mindfulness meditation can enhance attention control, reduce mind-wandering, and reduce emotion dys-regulation.In applying mindfulness meditation, it can help young people develop a greater awareness of their thoughts and feelings; helping them manages their behavior and better decisions (Creswell & Lindsay, 2014).

3.ProvisionofPositive Reinforcement: Positive reinforcement refers to the use of rewards or reinforcements to increase the likelihood of desirable behaviour. Positive reinforcement such as awards, prizes, gifts, donations, and scholarship can help young people develop positive attitude and behaviours, which will in turn, serve as a prelude to fostering peace and tranquility in the society (Tugba, 2020).

4. Self-regulation Technique: This is a strategy and process that individuals use to actively manage and control their behaviour in order to achieve desired goals.This technique involves self-awareness, self-monitoring, self-reflection and self-evaluation(Pranoto,2016).Developing self-regulation techniques such as learning to take deep breaths before reacting to a challenging situation, can help to tame restlessness (Rueda &Rothbart, 2019).

5.GroupCounsellingMethods: This is a method in whichcounsellorsorganize workshops, talk shows and seminars for youths in schools, organizations and religious settings. Such settings could deliver talks and presentations on topics like citizenship education, patriotism, rule of law, and good governance to create opportunity for the youth to understand their roles in the society (Igbo & Innocent, 2013).Counselling sessions could be extended to the participants on dangers and negative consequences of restiveness to the socio-economic growth and development which are pillars of national security.

6.Assertive Training: This is a structured learning process aimed at behaviour modification, specifically focusing on developing assertiveskills. Assertiveness is a fundamental type of behaviour modification that involves confidently expressing oneself, engaging in open communication,and problem-solving effectively (Blynova,2020).Since most youths are being recruited by politicians and highly placed individuals to act restively in pursuing their primordial interest, the youths should be equipped with assertive skills in order to be able to say NO to such instigations and indoctrination without hurting the elites and members of the peer group.

7. Parental Involvement and Support: This refers to the level of engagement and participation of parents in their children education and upbringing. It encompasses home- support involvement,school-based involvement,co-parenting support,and parental acceptance(Antipkina,2020).Parents who are involved in their children's lives, education and offer emotional support, as well as provide the needed guidance in decision-making can help to reduce restiveness among their young children (Jeynes, 2005).

8.SocialSupport: Thisrefers to assistance, support,and positive impact provided by parents, individualphilanthropists, parents, and organisations to promote physical health,mental health and overall well- being (Yuldasheva,2021). Building positive support and tie relationships with family members, peers, and other community members can help young people feel connected and reduce restlessness (Seidman et al. 2016).

9.Role Modeling: This refers to individuals who serve as examples or sources of inspiration for others in terms of positive behaviour, attitudes or achievement.They play a significant role in shaping the beliefs,values,and aspirations of individuals, particularly in the context of career development and performance(Garcia,2019). Having positive role models who guide and mentor young people can help them develop values and goals that channel their energy in productive ways rather restiveness.

10.ExtracurricularActivities: Theseare activities that take place outside the regular and formal academic curriculum aimed at promoting the social and psychological development of individuals.These activities are important for the formation of social competence,personal development and education (Klyushina,2020).Participating in extracurricular activities, such as sports, music or clubs can help young people develop more positive social connections and reduce restiveness.

11.Community Engagement: Active and voluntary involvement of individuals and groups through understanding, evaluation, and exchange of information can build personal, social, and community developmentand decision-making process as well as assist in addressing and changing problematic conditions within communities (McNeish,2021).Empowering young people to take an active role in their communities(such as volunteering or joining civic organizations), can give them a sense of purpose and direction which will help to reduce restiveness.

12.Value Re-orientation: Most of 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, drugs and alcohol abuse are predictors of restiveness among youths (Chapkovski, 2021).

Implications of Youth Restiveness on National Security

Youth restiveness is inimical to socio-economic development of a country. The way and manner through which the youth strive to achieve their goals by agitation have crippled productive level in the society. In the course of struggling to protect their interest through the use of youth restiveness, they create more problems for themselves. These acts push them to commit crimes that they could be apprehended for, thereby worsening their situations. Thus,following are further implications of youth restiveness on national security:

1. Increased criminal activities. The desire for youths to have better lives without having meaningful skills and educational knowledge to meet up has pushed them into criminality. Crime is a risk to societal safety.
2. The restive activities of the youths create uncertainty and anxiety. They lose self confidence in themselves. The general insecurity caused by the activities of the restive youths cost the security agencies in combatting the menace.
3. Pettinger (2017) stated that “a low rate of economic growth can cause higher unemployment”. When there is inflation, mismanagement and misappropriate of funds in a country, there is bound to be financial crisis. Youth restiveness can have a negative impact on the economy, as it can lead to disruptions in key sectors such as oil and gas, transportation, and agriculture which have wider implications for national security (Ating&Amadi, 2016).

4. Increased under employment: The unemployment rate in Nigeria is increasing rather than decreasing. Fraudulent schemes have strived with millions looking to make quick buck in the absence of gainful employment.
5. Rebelliousness: Rebellious communal behaviour by the youth is caused by incessant demands for their interest to be met. The restiveness of youth affects social and economic activities negatively thereby leading to hardship. This can produce devastating consequences in a form of sentenced to life imprisonment or death.
6. Youth restiveness can take the form of militancy, which can lead to armed conflict between youth groups and the government. This has serious effects on national security and stability (Adisa&Aworanti, 2015).
7. Youth restiveness can also lead to cybercrime. Youth may use their technological skills for illegal purposes such as hacking and identity theft. This can pose a security risk to individuals and institutions (Onwuka, 2014).
8. Youth restiveness can contribute to brain drain, as talented and skilled youth may leave the country in search of better opportunities elsewhere. This can have wider implications for the development and security of the nation (Opara, 2015).
9. Youth restiveness promotes conflicts and has affected the peaceful coexistence of citizens as well as foreigners.

Conclusion

Youth restiveness encompasses violent activities ranging from disruption of political, religious, academic, social and economic activities, and lawlessness in the society. The acts of, kidnapping of citizens and foreign workers, intra and inter-cult activities, armed robbery, vandalization of oil and gas pipelines, political thuggery, reckless shooting and wanton killings of innocent citizens are aftermath of restiveness. Poor governmental policies, lack of job opportunities, poor standard of living, inadequate education system, poor infrastructural facilities, fake and false information among others have been identified in the paper as reasons for youth restiveness. The involvement of youths in criminal activities has further enhanced conflict and insecurity and crippled the development of the country. The attempt of government and non-governmental organization to handle this restiveness needs to be improved and new strategies to solve these oblivious problems. The authorities in both state and federal levels should endeavour to provide lasting solutions to these problems by introducing psychological

and practical strategies that will help curb dissatisfaction, marginalization and discrimination among youth for peace, unity, and national development.

Recommendations

1. The paper recommends the followings to curb steps to minimize youth restiveness:
2. Increased youth employment opportunities. This means that there should be massive creation of job opportunities for youths through improved infrastructural facilities and use of Information and Technology.
3. Effective and favourable government policies that has direct impacts on teaming youths.
4. Government should meet up with the basic needs of the youths such as food, clothing, and shelter.
5. Provision of social amenities:Government should provide people with educational facilities, clean and portable water, roads access, electricity and medical facilities, among others.
6. Establishment of skill acquisition centres to provide necessary skills for our youths.This will assist to reduce serious challenges faced by the youths in terms of over dependency for their livelihood.
7. Improvements in the economy to provide opportunities for the youths to develop a wholesome attitude in the labour market.
8. Control measures against fake news and misinformation by relevant government agencies should be intensified to curb effects of social media on youth restiveness.

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