

POVERTY AND YOUTH RESTIVENESS IN NORTHERN NIGERIA WITH A CRITICAL OUTLOOK

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Abstract

The endemic poverty afflicting the people of Northern Nigeria, has led to a state of hopelessness and the recourse to violence against the state, which have manifested in the form of Boko -Haram struggle and other armed bandits. This study investigate poverty and youth restiveness in northern Nigeria with a critical outlook. Two research questions guided the study. The study adopted descriptive survey design. The sample size was 100 youths drawn from northern states in Nigeria. The researcher designed the questionnaire for data collection. Item mean was used in answering the three research questions. Findings from the study revealed that underemployment and unemployment are the major causes of youth restiveness in the region, also poverty has influenced crimes among members of impoverished communities, making the youths to become vulnerable to violating laws and orders which serve as a linkage between poverty and crime in the region. The paper made the following recommendations: Nigerian government should embark on effective poverty alleviation and human capital development programmes in order to empower the teeming youths who are mostly vulnerable to be easily recruited for restiveness.

Keywords: poverty, crime, youth and restiveness

Introduction

The World Bank President Jim Yong Kim at the IMF/ World Bank spring meeting held in April, 2014 restated that Nigeria is one of the top five countries that have the highest number of poor people. Nigeria, he said ranked third in the world, while India ranked number one with 33 percent of the world poor. China is ranked second with 13 percent of the world's poor, followed by Nigeria where 7 percent of the world's poor live in. Jim Yong Kim stated that these three countries are home to 760 million of the world poor (Omoh, 2014). Poverty prevalence and youth restiveness are simultaneously at all-time high levels. According to National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), poverty incidence grew to 69 percent in 2010 and projected to be 71 percent in 2011. This is the worst record in Nigeria's history, and the paradox is that this happened during the unprecedented oil boom. This is the only government in Nigeria's history where rapidly increasing expenditure was associated with increasing poverty (Soludo, 2015).

The European Commission's definition of poverty which was adopted in 1984 goes thus: the poor shall be taken to mean persons, families and groups of persons whose resources (material and cultural, social) are so limited as to exclude them from the minimum acceptable ways of life in the member state in which they live. Poverty is a crisis that is habitual and it conveys message of hardship which is difficult to deny. It speaks publicly through visible misery, persisting destitution, endemic hunger and visible malnutrition. Akanmidu (2004), noted that due to its nature, the endemic poverty afflicting the people of Northern Nigeria, has led to a state of hopelessness and the recourse to violence against the state, which have manifested in the form of Boko -Haram struggle and other forms of banditry.

Youth's restiveness has led to the inactiveness of the youths to tackle problems, discharge responsibilities effectively and inability to meet goals of the society. Elegbeleye (2005) identified one of the factors that can lead to youth restiveness as "perceived victimization arising from economic exploitation". In modern times, the inability of youths to exercise self-control on issues have led to conflict and protests and has been narrowed down to scarcity and unequal distribution of natural resources, non-recognition, marginalizing

their society, having feelings of discontentment, non favourable government laws, lack of quality education and high rate of employment. Nsidibe et al (2017) stated that restiveness orchestrated by youth has been on the increase in almost all communities in Nigeria, most especially in recent past. Since the inception of our nascent democracy, there has been a proliferation of unrivalled violence, killing of innocent people and most recently the insurgence in the North East, and marauding attack by Fulani's herdsmen across the country. There is usually a state of anarchy, destruction of lives and properties when youths are not satisfied. At this stage, the actions of the youths are regarded as criminal in nature because their expressions are usually violent and disrupt law and order as well as various activities in the societies. In most cases, it takes the use of force such as involving the police to keep the violence of the youths in check.

Youth unrest is a social challenge which has a strong negative bearing on the security and well being of individuals and families in that society. This is because the restive youth are uncontrollable and find it difficult to respect constituted authorities and as such are a source of danger to those around them. Youth who devote their energy and vitality to these irresponsible conducts and roles are likely to negatively affect the development of the country. Furthermore, Shofola (1994) observes that the identified manifestations of youth restiveness are against the social norms and expectations of the Nigerian society, and as such they are antisocial activities and deviant behaviours. Also, these negative actions of the youth such as kidnapping, armed robbery, bombing of oil installations are shrouded in violence and are criminal in nature. In the opinion of Ovwigho and Ifie (2009), population explosion is a significant factor in the discussion of youth restiveness in Northern Nigeria.. They argue that polygamy is still very much practiced in the region, due to their religious belief, a man can marry up to four wives without having an economic source to cater for the offspring of that union. In most cases all these children cannot be provided with formal education and adequately cared for physically, socially and morally, so they grow up to become problems to the society. The writer is of the opinion that youth restiveness manifest in the following ways as; staying away from home, rebelliousness, gangsterism, armed robbery, cultism and prostitution are common in societies where population control and monogamy are not practiced. It is against this backdrop that the researcher is motivated to investigate poverty and youth restiveness in Northern Nigeria.

Research questions

The following research questions guided the study

1. What are the causes of poverty and youth restiveness in Northern Nigeria?
2. What is the linkage between poverty and youth restiveness in Northern Nigeria?
3. What are the implication of youth restiveness to security and sustainable development in Northern Nigeria?

Methods

The study adopted the descriptive survey design. The target population were the nineteen states in northern Nigeria. There are about 77, 077, 423 ,youths in the 19 northern states.

Sample and sample techniques

The sample size for this study was 100 youths drawn from 10 states out of the nineteen states. Simple random sample was used in selecting ten states and 10 respondents were also selected using balloting without replacement. The total sample size for the study was one hundred youths.

Instrument for data collection

The researcher designed well-structured and multiple choice questionnaires for the respondents. The questionnaire is divided into (2) parts, Part A aimed at soliciting for bio-data, while Part B was structured on Likert five point scale, with three sub-sections , structured based on the three research questions.

Method of data collection

The researcher sought permission from the respondents. The researcher with assistance of nine research assistant visited respondents in the respective ten states and administered the questionnaire. This method facilitated on the spot collection of completed questionnaire.

Method of data analysis

Item mean was used in answering the three research questions. The benchmark for acceptance was 3.0 below it was rejection.

Results

Research question one: What are the causes of poverty and youth restiveness in Northern Nigeria?

Tables 1 Causes of poverty and youth restiveness in Northern

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	N	D	SD	MEAN
1.	Inadequate educational opportunities	44	51	5	0	0	4.4
2.	High level of underemployment and unemployment	60	37	2	1	0	4.6
3.	Bad government, poor coordination, ineffective resources allocation, corruptions and perceived marginalization of mostly youths of the region	41	51	3	3	2	4.3
4.	Illiteracy, lack of adequate productive/entrepreneurial skills by youth either due to lack of formal education or ineffective school curriculum	45	50	3	1	1	4.4
5.	Feeling of alienation, frustration, and abandonment due to factors such as serve poverty, unemployment and elite corruption	28	54	13	2	3	4.0

Results from table 1, indicate that all listed causes of poverty and youth restiveness in northern Nigeria have a high ratings from the respondents’ perspective ranging from 4.0 to 4.6. However, on the overall, high level of underemploy’ment and unemployment stand out as a major cause of poverty and youth restiveness in northern Nigeria (Mean 4.6).

Research question two : What is the linkage between poverty and youth restiveness in Northern Nigeria?

Table 2: Linkage between poverty and youth restiveness in Northern Nigeria

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	N	D	SD	MEAN
6.	Crime offers an avenue for impoverished youths to obtain goods and services that they cannot get to achieve through legitimate means	44	46	5	5	0	4.3
7.	Poverty influence crimes among members of impoverished communities, making the youths to become vulnerable to violating laws and orders	55	42	1	1	1	4.5
8.	Poverty can lead to high levels of frustration and stress that in turn lead many youth to get involved in criminal activities.	50	45	2	3	0	4.4
9.	Low income, unemployment tend to spur youth restiveness, rebellion and violence related crime among youths	46	49	3	2	0	4.4
10.	For many impoverished youth, the prize or gain that crime yield may outweigh the risk of being punished and so care less about the consequences of their action	30	54	13	2	1	4.1

From the table 2 above, respondents expressed divergent views in respect of all items on the linkage between poverty and youth restiveness in Northern Nigeria going by the mean scores ranging from 4.1 to 4.5. the respondents agreed that poverty influence crimes among members of impoverished communities, making the youths to become vulnerable to violating laws and orders with a mean of 4.5.

Research questions three: What are the implication of youth restiveness to security and sustainable development in Northern Nigeria?

Table 3: The implication of youth restiveness to security and sustainable development in Northern Nigeria

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	N	D	SD	MEAN
11.	There is high rate of insecurity to lives and property occasioned by youth restiveness	51	47	2	0	0	4.5
12.	Youth restiveness most often than not leave behind a track of destruction of lives and properties of immense and unquantifiable measures	58	40	2	0	0	4.6
13.	Youth restiveness has hindered and destroyed a lot of developmental programmes and other business activities	45	52	0	1	2	4.4
14.	Youth restiveness discourage local and foreign investors	45	50	3	1	1	4.4
15.	Youth restiveness aggravated incessant cases of social vices and crime like armed robbery, destitution, prostitution, political thug and lot more	30	55	12	2	1	4.1

From table 3 above, the respondents view of the implication of youth restiveness to security and sustainable development in northern Nigeria shows that majority of respondents agreed with all the items issues with rating from 4.1 to 4.6.

Discussion of findings

The findings of the study revealed the causes of poverty and youth restiveness in northern Nigeria. The findings agreed with the work of Akanmidu (2004) who, noted that due to its nature, the endemic poverty afflicting the people of Northern Nigeria, has led to a state of hopelessness and the recourse to violence against the state, which have manifested in the form of Boko -Haram struggle and various forms of banditry. The findings also show there is a link between poverty and youth restiveness in northern Nigeria. This is confirmed by the result of the responses of the respondents in research question two, which strongly agree that poverty influences restiveness among members of impoverished communities making youths to become vulnerable to violating laws and orders. This findings is in concord with Elegbeleye (2005) who, identified one of the factors that can lead to youth restiveness as “perceived victimization arising from economic exploitation”. In modern times, the inability of youth to exercise self-control to issues that have led to conflict and protest has been narrowed down to scarcity and unequal distribution of natural resources, non-recognition, marginalizing their society, having feelings of discontentment, non favourable government laws, lack of quality education and high rate of employment. Nsidibe et al (2017) stated that restiveness orchestrated by youth has been on the increase in almost all communities in Nigeria, most especially in the recent past. Since the inception of our nascent democracy, there has been a proliferation of unrivalled violence, killing of innocent people and most recently the insurgence in North East, and marauding attack by Fulani’s herdsmen across the country.” There is usually a state of anarchy, destruction of lives and properties when youths are not satisfied.

Finding with respect to research question three on the implication of youth restiveness to security and sustainable development in northern Nigeria, revealed that youth restiveness and its attendant consequence have greatly exacerbated insecurities, hindered and destroyed a lot of developmental programmes and other business activities. This findings is in agreement with Shofola (1994) that the identified manifestations of youth restiveness are against the social norms and expectations of the Nigerian society, and as such they are antisocial and deviant behaviours. Also, these negative actions of the youth such as kidnapping, armed robbery, bombing of oil installations are shrouded in violence and are criminal in nature.

Recommendations

The recommendations were made:

1. The Nigerian government should embark of effective poverty alleviation and human capital development programmes in order to empower the teeming youths who are most vulnerable to be easily recruited for restiveness.
2. Government should endeavor to provide a stable political environment in the country that will not encourage insecurity.
3. There should be well structured orientation programmes for youth enlightenment and visual demonstration through the social media on the evil of restiveness, banditry, terrorism and the like.
4. Northern political gladiators, leaders and academicians should encourage the teeming youths to get educated or acquire skills to be more functional and value adding to the society so as to shun all nefarious activities.

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