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## THE IMPACT OF YOUTH RESTIVENESS ON PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE AND DEVELOPMENT OF NIGERIA

OMOTOSO, OLATUNJI JOHN

Department of History,  
College of Education, Lanlate, Oyo State, Nigeria.  
+2348033242662.

E-mail: [shootjohn2001@yahoo.com](mailto:shootjohn2001@yahoo.com)

### Abstract

*The youths are the most viable and productive group of people which also constitute the most vibrant and energetic sector of any nation. This is due to the fact that they possess distinct characteristics which clearly distinguish them from other segments of the society. These include: physical strength, psychological prowess, superb intelligence, perseverance and many more. The irony of it however, is that these potentials are not harnessed or put into positive use by these youths and this is occasioned by myriads of factors. No doubt, youth involvement in violent conflicts remains one of the most challenging issues that are bedeviling the peace of Nigeria. Hence, youth restiveness and violent conflicts pervaded the social fabric of Nigeria as a whole. It is in view of this that this paper tries to examine the major causes of youth restiveness in Nigeria; its effect on the sociopolitical and economic development of Nigeria and therefore proffers possible solutions to the ugly trend.*

**Keywords:** *Conflicts, Development, Peace, Restiveness, Violence, Youth*

## Introduction

Youth restiveness in Nigeria has become a recurring decimal most especially when the country returned back to democracy in 1999. The rate at which the incidence of youth restiveness occurred in various towns and states in Nigeria reached its climax after the military handed over the rein of governance to the politicians. The irony of this ugly trend is that, in a democratic setting where rule of law; freedom; peace and security to lives and properties are expected to be guaranteed, the reverse is just the case due to the incessant youth restiveness in the Nigerian society. Almost in these cases, many people lost their lives; some have their properties destroyed while others were injured and remained handicapped (Aminu, 2006). In addition to these, government properties were vandalized and destroyed by these irate youths.

The fact that needs to be made here is that, most Nigerian youths today, have increasingly become perpetrators of violence, not because they are naturally violent, but mainly due to the structurally violent nature of the society which they find themselves. This no doubt, was as a result of some causes ranging from the failure of Nigeria political elites, corruption; mismanagement and misallocation of resources and lack of basic infrastructures in the society. All of these and many more factors made the Nigerian youths to be increasingly frustrated and become violent at the slightest provocation (Joel, 2013).

According to Yusuf (2014), Nigeria as a nation had witnessed insecurity to lives and properties through communal clashes; riots and cases of ethno-religious clashes. For instance, the Hausa and Kajes in Kaduna State; the massacre in Odi in Bayelsa State; the Tivs and Jukun in the middle belt; kidnapping of all workers in the Niger Delta crises; Opc and Hausa clashes in Lagos and most recently that of Hausa and Yoruba in Ile-Ife In Osun state. All these were as a result of youth restiveness whose ages range between 18 and 20 years.

In the words of Yusuf (2014), this scenario was further exacerbated by the unwillingness from the side of government to curtail the ugly phenomenon. All these no doubt had affected the peaceful co-existence of various ethnic groups in Nigerian society and therefore had a negative impact on national development.

## An overview of major causes of youth Restiveness in Nigeria

There are many factors responsible for myriads cases of Youth restiveness in Nigeria some of which are:

### Unemployment

Unemployment has become one of the prevailing phenomena among the youths in Nigeria. For instance, about 70% of Nigerian populations are believed to be unemployed, all fall within the working age of 17-65 years and out of these unemployed, 50% are youths that fall within 17-45 years. In the words of Imomoh (2002), Youths are mostly in the vanguard of the crises that usually erupted in the oil producing areas. Also, Akintoye (1999), submitted that Zango Kataf crisis was orchestrated by the unemployed youths of Ayarf and Hausa communities of Kaduna State.

### Inaccessibility to quality education

It is widely believed that quality education has a direct bearing on national integration and progress. Lack of access to quality education on the part of Nigerian youths has been

attributed to the incessant youth restiveness. For instance, in the northern part of the country, there is low rate of literacy level in the region and this no doubt, contributed enormously to the high rate of violent crises in the area.

### **Perceived marginalization of the Youths**

Another major cause of Youth restiveness in Nigeria is the issue of marginalization of the youths by the ‘so-called’ political elite in the society. Some have rightly concluded that the future of Nigerian youths had been hijacked by the ‘selfish’ elders and selfish political class in the society. The elders and political elites have occupied every position without empowering the younger generations, hence, the youth restiveness in the society. In addition, the activities of the oil companies predispose the youth to restiveness because they did a lot damages to the environment without commensurate compensation.

### **Indiscipline**

Indiscipline on the part of Nigerian youths is another major cause for the alarming rate of youth restiveness. Adoba (2017) submitted that “our youths are neck-deep in accessing pornographic websites on the internet; joining of secret cults, smoking, drinking, fornicating, partying and generally being unruly”. According to him, the yardstick for measuring greatness for youths today includes the above –listed social vices.

### **Bad Governance**

Anasi (2010) opined that bad governance is more common than good in Nigeria which according to her had resulted in disjointed development. She went further to say that successive administrations in Nigeria have not allocated much to the needs of the youths, and to worsen the trend, the meager allocation are often diverted by government officials to their private accounts and projects. Hence, the agitation by the youths who perceive that resources meant for them are being wasted by those in authority.

### **Lack of Basic Infrastructure**

In Nigeria, most communities lack basic infrastructural facilities which can promote their development. For instance, most rural communities in Niger Delta region, an area where oil is being tapped have no access to potable water, health facilities, and electricity and communication facilities. Consequently, the youths in these areas had no choice than to resort to various violence activities ranging from destruction of oil pipes, kidnapping of expatriates and killing of innocent people in the society, all in the name of agitating for equitable distribution of resources.

### **Impact of Youth Restiveness on Peaceful Co-existence and National Development.**

#### **Loss of Lives and Properties**

One of the major consequences of youth restiveness in Nigeria is that of loss of innocent lives and properties. Taking the ethnic-religious crises in Plateau state for example, it was estimated that many lives were lost while properties worth billions of Naira were destroyed. In another submission, the real value of properties and numbers of lives lost to the crises cannot be ascertained (Omotoso, 2016). During the crises, there was heavy loss of livelihood and properties; residential houses; shops; hotels; workshops; schools and hospitals were

targets of the attacks. Survivors of such attacks are often dehumanized and exposed to various traumas.

### **Loss of Developmental Projects**

Added to the loss of lives and properties is the loss of developmental projects in the troubled areas due to the restiveness of youths. According to Ikunga (2012), during the crises in the Niger Delta area, angry youths transferred their aggression to the government and oil companies infrastructures in the region. For instance, there was pipeline vandalism and looting. Oil companies in those areas were forced to close down operations and this no doubt led to loss of jobs; scarcity of fuel and there was a big cut in production of crude oil which really affects the economy of Nigeria as a whole. Yusuf (2013) posited that these crises deterred investments as no investor will venture into business where there are insecurity and uncertainties.

### **Distrust among ethno-religious group**

Youth restiveness had further damaged the fragile trust that had characterized the relationship between and among ethnic groups in Nigeria. As should be noted, most of the crises in various part of the country often adopt ethnic and religious coloration. Whenever the people have any resentment against the government, youths are always in the vanguard of being used to foment trouble and rather than facing the government, the youths erroneously transferred their aggression against other ethnic groups who reside in their communities. Consequently, there was the greater distrust and creation of deep xenophobia among the ethnic groups (Omotoso, 2016)

### **The Role of Nigeria Peace Corps in Curbing Youth Restiveness in Nigeria**

The Nigeria peace corps is a non-governmental organization (NGO) that is affiliated to the Federal Ministry of Youth Development since 2004. It enjoys membership of all youth organization which is the National Youth Council of Nigeria. Peace Corps is a youth development body whose functions are different from that of other security agencies in the country. The organization is a para-military organization and the United Nations Economic and Social Council accorded it special consultative status since 2012. The bill establishing Peace Corps of Nigeria as a full-fledged para-military organization that would be recognized by the Nigerian constitution has been passed into law and still awaiting presidential assent. Peace Corps therefore has a big role to play in curbing the incessant cases of youth restiveness in the country. The peace corps as a youth development body has a role to play towards proper orientation and the development of a culture of social citizenship which will fit into the functional framework of Nigeria. This can be done by re-orientating the youths about their social responsibility in ensuring the peace of the country. The youths need to be aware that they are future leaders of tomorrow who should not be allowed to be turned to thugs or hooligans by the selfish political elites.

Also, Peace Corps should be at the vanguard of repositioning public, media and all the stakeholders in order to address the question of conflict, conflicts prevention; peace buildings; democracy and good governance through public education and awareness campaigns.

In addition, Peace Corps can be used in promoting and advancing the notion of 'multiculturalism' whereby the various indigenous ethnic groups in Nigeria would tolerate

and accommodate all the streams of immigrants that had come to settle within their communities.

## **Conclusion**

It is obvious that Nigerian youths are always at the vanguard of perpetrating violence which no doubt had threatened the peaceful co-existence of various ethnic groups in Nigeria. This ugly trend had as well affected the growth and development of the country. The reasons behind youth restiveness however, range from bad governance occasioned by the inability of the ruling class to allocate much to the needs of the youths. The youths are not being given quality education needed for national integration and progress. Also majority of Nigerian youths are either unemployed or under employed. The only employment readily available for the youths is that of being employed as political thugs to victimize perceived enemies of the politicians. In addition to these, the youths are being marginalized in the governance of their communities by the selfish political class who diverted large sums of money meant for the development of rural communities to their own personal account, thus leaving the youths and the masses to suffer. Consequently, the youths then resorted to violence as a way of getting back what has been stolen from them by the political elites.

As should be expected, youth restiveness had impacted negatively on socio-economic development in affected areas in particular and on Nigeria as a whole. During these crises, many lives were lost while properties worth billions of naira were being destroyed by these rampaging youths. Moreso, there was the damage to infrastructural facilities by the youths which impacted negatively on the growth and development of Nigeria and shook the very foundation of our togetherness as a nation (Owede, Adewuye and Arunah, 2016).

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