

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT POLICY: A PANACEA FOR MANAGING YOUTH VIOLENCE IN NIGERIA

**Agbegbedia Oghenevwoke Anthony, PhD¹ and
Ejemezu Charles Ikechukwu²**

¹Department of Criminology and Security Studies, College of Management and Social Sciences,
Achievers University Owo, Ondo State. Nigeria.

Email: omonoghens@yahoo.com

²Department of Foreign Languages, Afe Babalola University Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria.

Email: cikd1979@yahoo.com

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ABSTRACT

Youth violence in Nigeria has become a wrong legacy since the country gained independence. It bedevils the progress, peace and tranquillity of the country and indeed the universal world in time and space. Youth violence poses a serious and to some extent hidden social problems to Nigeria's population that it now constitutes a major challenge to the government. In addressing this challenge, this paper therefore examined what youth violence is, the factors that promote it in the society and how development policy could be used in managing it. Secondary source of information was adopted for data collection. Results show that youth violence is very rampant in Nigeria than what political scientists and sociologists think. Some of its causes include the role of the elites in the society, political instrumentalism, family influence and poverty to mention but a few. Youth violence affects the growth and development of the country as well as increase youth homicides and other societal ills. However, the federal government has established certain youth developmental policies and programmes such as the YouWin, Nigeria Youth Parliament and the Nigeria's Youth Entrepreneurship as means for managing youth violence in the country. However, in order to totally eradicate youth violence from the country, the federal government should make sure that employment is provided for these teeming youths and the established policies and programmes fully implemented.

Keywords: Youth, Youth Violence, Development, Policy, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Youths are considered as the heart beat of any nation. Any serious government that wants to succeed must take youth development very seriously. Any nation without youth development would be heading for a disaster; if properly managed can be very useful and if not can be disastrous. They are also the greatest asset any meaningful nation can boast of. They are the future leaders of tomorrow, without their input in any nation, that nation is bound to fail. Policy direction in any institutions helps to direct the action plan of that institute and drive down the plans and objectives of such institution to more realistic dreams. According to the Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary, policies are principles, rules, and guidelines formulated or adopted by an organization to reach its long-term goals and typically published in a booklet or other form that is widely accessible. Policies and procedures are designed to influence and determine all major decisions and actions, and all activities taking place within the boundaries set by them (Hornby, 2006). This implies that policies are those statements which guide the thinking and action of any organization to enable them achieve the organization's set goals and objectives. For example, an organization may have a sales' policy or an employment policy which sharpens the organizations strategy.

Youth violence is one of the most visible and recorded type of violence in the modern day Nigeria and indeed globally. Daily reports on this type of violence by gangs in schools, streets, banks, industries, public and private organisations, homes etcetera abound on newspapers and other forms of media. The main victims and major perpetrators of this kind of violence are the youths themselves, adolescents and young adults. However, youth violence varies from country to country, one community to another, from gender to gender and so on. Mohammad (2005) stated that youth violence has reached unprecedented proportions in contemporary discourse on Nigeria's emerging democracy. Beginning from May 29th 1999, when the country re-commenced democratic rule, Nigeria has recorded very bizarre experiences in the domain of violence committed by young people. These acts of violence embrace murder, religious uprisings, party clashes, cult clashes, shooting, stabbing, kidnapping for ransom, armed robbery, including armed bank robbery, theft, burglary, rape, rioting especially against government policies, vandalism, ethnic militancy and so on. As noted by Obateru (1994:71) these types of violence are also characteristics of urban violence. In addressing this issue, this paper therefore examined what youth violence is and how youth development policy could be used to manage it.

Objectives of the study:

The objectives of the study include:

- To define and explain the concept "youth".
- To examine the history of youth development policy in Nigeria
- To examine the factors responsible for youth violence in Nigeria
- To examine violence and youth violence in Nigeria.
- To discuss how youth development policy could be promoted to manage youth violence in Nigeria.

Study methodology

The study adopted the analytic cum historical research design. Data were collected through secondary sources which included published books, journals and internet materials among others.

Significance of the study

This study focused on how youth development policy could be adopted in managing or reducing youth violence in Nigeria. Therefore the study will contribute to the total stock of knowledge about the concepts of youth, youth violence, development policy and other related issues. It is also a contribution to knowledge on the current youth violence being experienced in the country (Nigeria) in recent times. Above all, the outcome of this study will be of great intellectual and practical value to a generation of stakeholders, policy makers, security experts, academia, scholars to mention but a few.

Scope of study

It could be deduced from the topic that the study involved youth violence and thus, the study is limited only to youth violence and not other violence such as political violence, urban violence, school violence, domestic violence and other forms of violence. Besides, the study covered the period between when Nigeria gained independence till date.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

Definition of youth

Globally, youth is described as the period in an individual's life and this runs between the end of childhood and entry into the world of work (Onuekwusi & Effiong, 2002). According to Carrino (2005), youths are the largest generation ever to transit to adulthood. Comprising 30 percent of the population in the developing world, young people present a set of urgent economic, social, and political challenges that are crucial to long term progress and stability. People in this age bracket definitely constitute a sizeable chunk of a nation's population on which the burden of nation building falls. In Nigeria, for example, youths are seen as "vital sources of manpower for development" (Olujide, 2008). Youths are rightly seen as leaders of tomorrow. The youths also constitute the major resource base for any country that seeks to embark on any meaningful rural development projects. Hence, the kinds of education (formal or informal) those youths are exposed to or have access to will determine the nation's overall development. According to Bukhari (2012) the youthful population in Nigeria in 2006 census constituted over 70% of the population. He argued that Nigeria is seating on a keg of gun powder ready for explosion, if the reality of frustration and hopelessness among the vast of Nigerian youths are not quickly addressed.

According to Kenniston (1971 quoted in Mohammad, 2005), youth refers to a period between adolescence and adulthood in a post modern era. Berger (1972 quoted in Mohammad, 2005) noted that youth cuts across age, pointing to culture as what really matters. According to him, anyone who feels youthful and exhibits such qualities as spontaneity, impulsiveness, energy to mention but a few, is a youth. According to the Nigeria constitution, youth is defined as anyone between the ages of eighteen and thirty (Albert, 1997). In essence, it could be referred to as 'that time of life that is neither childhood nor adulthood but rather, sometime in-between.' The United Nations Children Education Fund, UNICEF (1972 quoted in Karim, 2011) regarded those between the age of 15 and 35 years as youth. But as Johnson (1975 quoted in Karim, 2011:210) argued, while leadership of youth programmes has no upper age limit, their membership has in practice covered people of over 35-45 years old.

Even though Manning and Truzzi (1972:54 quoted in Mohammed, 2005) have argued that the youth is not the obviously young and relatively naive and inexperienced person, the notion of deficiency, or preparatory state has often been implied in the definition of youth. While for instance,

some scholars see youth as a recapitulation period, a maturation process, for others it is a psycho-sexual period of lack of experience that falls between childhood and adulthood. To others, youth is a group that have reached puberty, but not yet acquired the full rights and duties of adult life, such as marriage, family and earning of living (Abhuere, 2000:85). Youths according to Adedoyin (2003) and Torimiro (2008) are said to possess the characteristics such as greater physical strength, greater knowledge acquisition propensity, faster rate of learning, faster reaction time, innovative proneness, love for adventure and preference for boldness, minimal risk aversion, less fear of failure, less conservation etcetera.

Nevertheless, the definition of youth needs not to be given priority at this age any longer, instead, the impact of young people called 'the youth' within the society. In sum, what the world should demand at this stage should be qualities of youth; not a time of life but a state of mind, a temper of will, a quality of imagination and a predominance of courage over timidity of the appetite for adventure, over the love of ease.

What is Violence?

Before delving into defining what youth violence is, it would be proper to briefly define what violence is. It is a concept that has been defined in different ways by several scholars. In essence, it defies any precise and generally accepted definition as it often serves as a catch all for every type of protest, militancy, coercion, destruction or muscle flexing which a given observer happens to fear or condemn. Wolf defined it as the illegitimate or unauthorised use of force to effect decisions against the will of others (Wolf, 1969 quoted in Agbegbedia, 2011:43). Audi (1971 quoted in Agbegbedia, 2011) succumbed to the fact that violence is the unjustified use of force. Tamuno (1993:3) concurred that violence is an unlawful use of threat or force. Anifowose's opinion is not different from the above as he stated that it is an illegal use of force (Anifowose, 1982:3). He agreed with Weber who sees the state as the exclusive source of the right to use of violence.

The government, which primary responsibility is to protect the state and its citizens often relies on force and violence, which they justified. However, this is not always true since law enforcement agents could easily exploit the states monopoly of violence to violate a person's right, their use of force is backed up by the state. Corsini (1999) defined violence as the expression of hostility and rage through physical force directed against persons or property. It is aggression in its most extreme and unacceptable form, and most investigators conclude it has no therapeutic justification since there are most constructive and humane ways of expressing anger. It is usually politically justified in defensive wars or in combating terrorism. Contrary to the preceding definitions, Englander (1999:2-3) regards violence as aggressive behaviour with the intent to cause harm, being physical or psychological. For her, the word 'intent' is the major word within this definition. Thus, harm occurring by accident does not qualify to be called violence. In other words, force used on an individual with intent to violate the person's right or will is what she defined as violence.

It has been noticed that youth violence not only lead to destruction of properties, lost of lives, drains government resources and diverts attention from other basic governmental and national issues, it often provokes undemocratic responses from both local and international bodies in the form of security forces. Nwolise (2008) concurred with this when he stated that:

Violence has led to loss of several hundreds of lives, destruction of both private and public properties worth billions of naira, discouragement of foreign and domestic investment and retardation of national unity and

integration, damage to the nation's image and psyche and slow pace of national development among others.

The above definitions of violence depict that violence involves the use of force and could therefore be demonstrated as a physical, psychological or structural act. Moreover, if such situation is not contained at the latent stage, it could lead to any type of violence basically political and youth violence. What then is youth violence?

Definition of Youth Violence

Against the definition of violence, youth violence could be defined as essentially a deviant or gang subculture. In essence, youth violence has deviant characteristics such as street corner gangs, which suggest an abnormal situation, which makes youth becomes liable to involvement in illegal or anti-social activities. Youth violence therefore refers to abnormal practices of youth which makes them become liable to involvement in illegal or anti-social activities. Most of the cases we have on violent are about youths whose behaviour run counter to the accepted standards of the society. As Cohen (1965:74 quoted in Mohammad, 2005) puts it: "these people usually have related problems: some of them are products of broken homes. Some especially the hawkers, beggars, touts, results to violent acts because their parents are poor, and there is no alternative."

The deviant activities of these gangs must be interpreted as an open manifestation of protest against the surrounding injustice and corruption with which they have to contend on a daily basis (Albert, 1997:286). Such gangsters often do not see anything wrong in what they do. They rationalize their activities by blending the general rules of the society to suit their own circumstances, which of course, negate the accepted standards. Delinquents as they are, argue that they deviate from accepted norms because: (a) many other people do similar things; (b) they simply lack better option; (c) they want to be heard in the society. Deviant youths often have peculiar life styles by which they are identified and feared by the general populace.

THEORIES OF YOUTH VIOLENCE

Two major theories could be adopted for explaining youth violence. They are: functionalists or Neo-functionalists theory and Marxists or neo-Marxists theory.

The Functionalists/Neo-Functionalists theory

According to this theory, youth violence is a functional necessity in the society, a disequilibrium that is corrected later. Youth violence results from the emergence of new social situations either in terms of new values and beliefs which contradict earlier held values and beliefs such as the movement of society from ascriptive-particularistic criteria to universalistic achievement criteria (Eisenstadt, 1956 quoted in Olutayo, 1994:192). In a more complex opinion, the youth movement is seen as a counter revolutionary force against societal transformation out of an industrial society into a post-industrial, postmodern and super-natural society of the future (Kenniston, 1971 quoted in Olutayo, 1994). The transition in this new society includes high rationalisation, and this explains 'violent revulsion by those whose skills and values are made obsolete by the new social resolution'.

In this regard, the youths are mainly affected as they are required to study for more years in order to acquire highly specialised skills and to postpone gratification into later adulthood. These youths experience a disjuncture in their earlier held mores, norms, values and beliefs and will thus,

rebel against inevitable progress in a blind, mindless and generally destructive way against rationalism, intellect, technology, organisation, discipline, hierarchy and all the requisites of a post industrial society (Olutayo, 1994:193). This entails that, for the functionalists, youth rebellion is transitional. More so, societies need not bother about revolt as youths would adjust with time; a new equilibrium will emerge which will halt youth opposition. As a result of this, the youth culture formed against the adult society which cuts across class lines is merely a socialisation dysfunction.

Marxists/Neo-Marxists theory

This theory sees youth revolt not as an atavistic and irrational reaction against the old culture but as an outgrowth of the society and an expression of its latent possibilities, a rational effort to remedy its failings. This prompted Bilton *et al* (1987 quoted in Olutayo, 1994) to state that there is need to doubt the sociological classification of youth in terms of age since there is neither an adult world nor a youth world. For them therefore, youth have unequal life chances, influenced by different family backgrounds. The youths are seen as fighting for a freer and more peaceful society and they see themselves as an historical vanguard given the responsibility of ensuring liberation from all restrains of oppression and all undemocratic forces within the society. Furthermore, the youths argue in various ways mostly against injustice and poverty and also try to assert certain status and positions for themselves.

It could be deduced from the above discourse that it is only the youths who can revolt against injustice in every society including the Nigeria society. This corroborate with the functionalists assertion. However, what differentiates the two theories is whether all youths will react in the same way against perceived oppression. In essence, youth violence is inevitable in any changing society and this is probably why there is no end to youth violence in Nigeria.

HISTORY OF YOUTH DEVELOPMENT POLICY IN NIGERIA

The history of youth development policy dates back to 1960 when Nigeria had her independent. Governments of all levels have adopted some youth friendly activities that have helped an average Nigerian youth to develop. Some are included in the school curriculum and some are not. The ones captured in the school policy are sporting competition and craft making in schools, formation of clubs like the rotary clubs, the debating clubs, dramatic clubs, Man O war, girls guide etc. These have in no small measure promoted some healthy habits like developing reading and writing culture, promoting competitive spirit among the youths, improving on their ability and mental health.

In 1970s the Federal government took another step further and established the Ministry of Youths and Sports Development in Nigeria. It was that ministry that gave birth to the famous and compulsory National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) of 1973 to the nation. By this policy it is expected that, at the end of a youth graduation from the University or Polytechnics in Nigeria (and even outside the country), a graduate is expected to serve the country for one year in any part of the 36 States and Federal Capital Territory working for Government or approved private sector. These National Youth Service Corps for our graduates from the higher institution has in no small measures exposed our youths to the realities of the Nation and has also given them opportunity to express their hidden talents, developmental skills and leadership qualities before joining the labour market (Second National Youth Policy Document of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2009).

The document further noted that the national youth policy in Nigeria was introduced in 1981 which was followed by the drafting of an inclusive social development policy for Nigeria in 1989, providing the basis for a review of the first policy on youth. Regrettably, by the early 1990s, these commendable efforts aimed at Youth Development started witnessing neglect.

In 2001 the first documented youth policy by the Obasanjo Administration was drafted and has the following carefully stated objectives:

1. *To ensure that the young people are given equal opportunities and guided to reach their full potentials.*
2. *Recognize the right of youths to make decisions and accept the consequences of their actions.*
3. *Foster appropriate values and positive attitudes among youths.*
4. *Inculcate in the Nigerian youths the virtues of patriotism, discipline, selfless service, honesty and integrity.*
5. *Inculcate in the youth's leadership and fellowship values and make them socially responsible and accountable.*
6. *Involve youths in decision making at all levels of government in all matters affecting them.*
7. *Develop and implement a comprehensive programme for youth socialization so that they can become good and productive citizens.*
8. *Provide opportunities for youths. Whether in or out of school for vocational training geared towards self employment and self-reliance.*
9. *Seek to offer solutions to youth problems such as drug abuse and addiction, teenage pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS, cultism, examination malpractices etc.*
10. *Inculcate in the youths the spirit of adventure, resourcefulness and inventiveness.*
11. *Promote the development of individual talents and infuse the youths with a keen sense of inquiry and achievement.*
12. *Organize and harness the energies of the youth in the service of their neighbourhoods and communities.*
13. *Encourage youths to join voluntary, community oriented youths organizations and participate actively in their programmes .*
14. *Facilitate interaction between Nigerian youths organizations and similar regional and international organizations.*
15. *Establish and sustain the operations of appropriate structures that will create a healthy and responsible youth fora.*
16. *Advocate, provide and protect the legal, constitutional, and legislative instruments as well as the framework for the implementation of the policy's programme. (<http://www.youth-policy.com>. Retrieved July 12, 2016).*

In 2007, The Federal Ministry of Youth Development was established by the then President Olusegun Obasanjo with the vision of empowering Nigerian youths to become “self reliant and socially responsible”. The Ministry ensured this by promoting the physical, mental and socio-economic development of the youth. It provided sustainable framework for integrated planning and collaboration for the development of policies and programmes, and other initiatives that promote and enhance the development of young Nigerians (Second National Youth Policy Document of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2009). In 2008, late President Yaradua administration came up with “Nigeria Youth Parliament”, a creation of the Federal Ministry of Youth Development

with the support of National Assembly, Abuja. The programme was inaugurated on August 25, 2008 (www.youth-policy.com. Retrieved July 12, 2016).

In 2011 during the administration of former President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, a number of programmes were introduced to cater for the youth's development and employment. Also, there was the re-introduction of the Junior Professional Officers' Programme (JPO-P) which was earlier established in 1963 to provide young professionals pursuing a career in development and opportunity to have experience in multilateral technical co-operations. It is funded with donations from donor countries. Currently, there are 19 sponsors comprising 16 countries from Europe and 3 from Asia. The programme is administered by the JPO Service Center in Copenhagen, Denmark (initially for one year with possibility of extension for another one year, depending on satisfactory performance making a total of two years objective of the programme). Nigeria became a member on 29th of October 2012 after signing a Memorandum of Understanding with UNDP to further actualize the president's major aspect of the transformation agenda which created employment for the youths (Bukhari, 2012).

The Nigeria's youth entrepreneurship strategy (YES) was another youth programme intervention introduced by former President Goodluck Administration. The programme was launched in Abuja, Nigeria on Tuesday 10th February, 2015. This was a broad based public-private partnership programme meant to redefine job creation for young men and women in Nigeria. This youth entrepreneurship strategy programme opened the gateway to creating more jobs for the youths in Nigeria, being part of the efforts geared towards achieving the envisaged two million jobs in the nation's economy. The administration also introduced an entrepreneurship programme called YouWin programme aimed at supporting any youth with a clear vision of a well thought out business idea with marketable potentials but without capital. The Federal government gave such individual a grant of 10 million naira as a take-off. The Federal Government also provided monitoring to make sure the money was not diverted for another purpose other than what it was meant for (<http://www.youwin.org>. Retrieved 12th July 2016).

FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PROMOTION OF YOUTH VIOLENCE IN NIGERIA

According to Mohammed (2005) sources of youth violence differ from one environment to another. He mentioned and discussed some of these factors to include:

a. Social and moral decadence: Youth violence appears to be the symptoms of the social and moral decadence of the Nigerian society in general. This decay manifests itself in the form of various social vices and ills epitomized by corruption, indiscipline, moral laxity and many other ills in the society. Therefore, since youths in Nigeria, who do not exist in a vacuum, observe this unhealthy social environment and the breakdown in societal values and norms, it is from what they observe and the signals they perceive that they, in order to achieve what they perceive as societal goals, emulate the behaviour of the society. Thus, the society in this way can be seen as the source of violence, for the youths merely reflect societal behaviour. In a society where persons who have achieved success through corruption are lauded, the signal sent to the youths is that corruption is an acceptable means of achieving success. This is of course reflects in the violent behaviour of youths.

b. Influence of peer group: Peer group pressure and the age factor play an important role in determining youth involvement in violence. The average age group of youth is between 15 and 35 years. Many youths of this age grade are at their most impressionistic and they tend to imitate easily. Thus, they are more easily manipulated and influenced by their peers, who encourage them to commit

delinquent acts on the grounds that it enhances their status and commitment in the society (Tamuno, 1993).

c. Culture of drug abuse: The prevailing culture of drug abuse has in no small way contributed to the upsurge in youth violence. Hard drugs such as heroin, marijuana and cocaine are often found in the possession of youths. Violent clashes often occur under the influence of alcohol and other mind disturbing drugs. In essence, abuse of drugs, such as cocaine, and over-indulgence in alcoholic drinks, such as gin and whisky, alter the state of the user's mind and predispose it to violence.

d. Role of mass media: The mass media has also contributed to the upsurge in youth violence in Nigeria. The importation of violent films, which are shown on television and the everyday brutalities of Nigerian life, such as cult clashes, assassination and public violence written about by the media with all the gory details and photographs, merge the frontiers of fantasy with reality for youths. It is possible that many of these delinquent youths merely act out what they have seen on video or television.

e. Ethnic nationalism and the formation of ethnic militias: The desire to wrestle power coupled with other considerations have led to increased ethnic nationalism among the minority ethnic groups, while the larger ethnic groups are equally strongly attached to their peculiar beliefs necessitating increased nationalism within them. Sometimes their activities are carried out in a manner that has led to violence. The cases of Odua Peoples' Congress OPC (Yoruba) and Movement for the Advancement of Sovereign State of Biafra MASSOB (Igbo) represent a good example of this perspective, while various minority ethnic groups such as Ijaw Youth Council (IYC), Middle Belt Forum among others, have been challenging the activities of the dominant ethnic groups. These competitions have ended up in ethnic militant attacks and ethnic clashes. However, it has been revealed that the youths constitute the bulk of these ethnic militias (Akinboye, 2001:176).

f. Role of the Elites: The elites in Nigeria have promoted youth violence. They represent essentially capitalists who depend on the state machinery for survival (Joseph, 1999:16). They are also a major player in the ethnic game for exploitation and manipulation of non-elites, usually directed towards personal/elite groups' interests, which mostly promotes division and hatred among people in pluralistic societies. These elites use ethnic and religious sentiment to achieve their political and socio-economic goals. For example, a Sokoto Prince Shehu Malami in his address to youth corps members posted to the state in 1986 publicly expressed that the Hausa race is superior to other ethnic groups in Nigeria (Kukah, 2002). The others too such as Yoruba and the Igbo have the same belief. In many other instances, the elites often sponsor youths in ethno-religious, political and cult violence. Such situation sets an appalling role model for youths and increases their vulnerability to or penchant for violent crime.

g. Economic factor: According to Obateru (1994:132), poverty apparently accounts for the bulk of violence due to such problems as unemployment, inadequate housing, physical and social infrastructures. The current depression in the Nigerian economy must have worsened the situation of youths; this has rendered the youths idle and almost hopeless, hence they have become instruments of manipulation by the elites for ethno-religious and political insurrections.

h. Urban congestion: This has contributed to the promotion of youth violence in Nigeria, especially in the cities. A greater proportion of Nigerians live in the cities. The rapid rate of urban agglomeration was caused by the superior employment, education, health care and other attractions of the urban environment. Most of these urban migrants are youths. Therefore, the increase in the rate of youth rural-urban drift complicates the problems of housing, employment and population in the cities. All

these problems produce stresses and strains that can be later expressed in the form of riots, cult clashes, vandalism and so on. It is a truism that incidents of youth violence are not so common in the rural areas in Nigeria.

i. Family influence: Family influence plays an undeniable role in shaping the characters of youths. The quality of their family life is reflected in their behaviour. In families where violence is a way of life, a reflection of it is seen in the violent behaviour of the youth of the family. It could be observed that children living in violent homes are themselves more likely to become agents of violence as they grow up. These children naturally see violence as an instrument of inter-group relations. Moreover, because many parents do not pay enough attention to their children, youths disturbed by such family situation may indulge in delinquent acts as a way of either seeking the parents' attention to rebelling against such parents. Thus, many youths have abandoned their homes, taking refuge in the motor parks or under bridges in urban centres. Youths from different homes connive together to do evil. This is usually the effect of what must have occurred to them at their homes. Sexual harassment and sexual violence are rampant among them and their female counterparts serve them as prostitutes.

j. Urban youth unemployment: This seems to make violence to be more economical and beneficial in the sense that urban youths see resources derived from violence as means of livelihood or means of sustenance that cater for their immediate and secondary needs. The unemployed youths are tools in the hands of political leaders and religious fundamentalists.

k. Loss of educational virtues and values: Urban educational system is deteriorating at an alarming rate; unemployment of young school leavers has reached embarrassing and unacceptable proportions. The youths no longer value education as violence arising out of students' protest has surpassed other forms in terms of frequency of occurrence, volatility and severity of effects on the society. The youth now believe that violence or force is the midwife of development and progress.

l. Political instrumentalism: In terms of political violence, youths have been the major instruments and they play prominent roles in political power agitation. They are involved in murder and assassination. Unfortunately, the leaders who are supposed to be building peace in their communities are the same people providing the resources for the youths to engage in political violence.

YOUTH VIOLENCE IN NIGERIA

Since Nigeria gained independence in 1960 till date, the country has witnessed several acts of violence perpetrated by youths. These violent acts take the forms of murder, cult clashes, armed robbery, theft, bombing, ethnic militancy, herdsman/farmers clashes, intra and inter party clashes and among others. This implies that on daily bases, youths are found with violent acts basically because they are agile, resilient, quip and adventurous. The ease with which youths are lured into the world of violent or stone-hearted brutality of these young men who think nothing but torture and murder is really worrisome. It is also disheartening that most of these youths may never live normal lives again. Most of them are lost forever to the world of drug abuse, crime and violent.

Violence has become a way out for the unskilled, unemployed, unemployable and misguided youths in Nigeria. Everywhere you turn indicates that youth violence does pay in the country; and the chances of being apprehended for violent acts are low enough to make the venture worth the while given the returns, confirming the utilitarian principles of the classical theorists. Youth violence yields maximum benefits because the system is unwilling and ill prepared to tackle it. Thus, youths who are involve in violence keep on terrorising the public because the proceeds of violence are warmly embraced by the society, including the holy sanctuaries.

Youth violence pays when politicians not only give guns to these youths during all forms of elections but also loot their ways to higher offices and nothing happens. Youth violence has its utility when the judiciary is compromised and the rest citizens accept it as a fact of life; when independence of the judiciary is threatened by unscrupulous men in both public and private life. Youth violence is advantageous when the church, our moral sanctuary is being used to launder ill-gotten money; when religious men and women of God accept houses abroad from corrupt public and bank officials. Youth violence is rewarding when security and other votes are used to feather private houses. Youth violence is rewarding when militants and those on the fringes of law and order are rewarded with multi-billion naira contracts to secure pipelines that they have, and are wilfully vandalising. Youth violence pays when Boko Haram terrorists keep on killing people and bombing strategic places in Nigeria without apprehension.

EFFECTS OF YOUTH VIOLENCE

The consequences of prevalent youth violence include but not limited to the following:

- Increase in youth homicides
- Unwanted pregnancies and restricted access to family planning information and contraceptives
- Increase in youth gangs against the society, mostly in areas of welfare deprivation like in the Niger Delta region
- Prevalent occurrences of risky and illegal activities like kidnapping, human trafficking, rape, armed robbery, theft, assassination etcetera.
- Lack of peaceful and secured co-existence among members of Nigerian society
- Breakdown of law and order whenever youth gangs strike
- Imaginary fear at the sight of young males standing in clusters
- Increase in school dropouts
- Political and social instability
- Increase in drugs abuse and illegal use of destructive weapons

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT POLICY: A PANACEA FOR MANAGING YOUTH VIOLENCE IN NIGERIA

According to Bukhari (2012) the wheel of development of any country lies on the shoulder of how productive and creative the youthful populations are. He further stated that there is need for the government to create atmosphere favourable for the youths to achieve their desired objectives.” More so, the “agonies of Boko Haram, militancy, armed robberies, scams and other social deviance are the products of lack of guardianship and vision for national development”. The youths therefore seize this opportunity to involve in violent acts. However, in order to prevent these ugly occurrences, it is proper that the various development policies discussed above should be properly taken into consideration.

In order to manage youth violence in Nigeria, the different development policy should be seen as representing a declaration and commitment of the priorities, directions and practical support that the country intends to provide for the development of the youths. It is a concrete and bold step to put the development and participation of youths at the centre of national development efforts. It is a pointer to the readiness of the Nigerian Federal Government to meet the needs and aspirations of the youths as well as seek solution to their problems. The different policies set principles and also provide the foundation for all stakeholders to empower the youths to realise their potentials and take advantage of

the opportunities available to make positive contributions to the growth and development of the entire country.

Furthermore, the development policy takes into account, the range of problems faced by the youths, anticipates the challenges that they are likely to confront and outlines appropriate aims, policies, programmes and implementation plans which will be put in place so as to empower the youths to take charge of their own destiny. It will also make them active participants in the shaping of the political and economic destiny of our nation. The policy also recognises that youths are not a homogenous category and that differences exist among them. Thus, the policy contains provisions that address the specific and special needs of each of several identified target groups.

The youths should also be allowed to participate in the decision making that involve them. This point to the fact that there is demand for the recognition of the right of youths to be heard, to have their views given serious attention and to play prominent duty in promoting their own best interest. This demand represents a profound challenge to traditional attitudes towards youths in most nations of the world. It entails a radical change in youth-adult relationships in all areas of life including the family, school, local communities, social services and at local, national and international levels. The age-old propensity of adult taking decisions concerning youths in their absence is at variance with the commitment respecting the participatory rights of the youths.

The youth development policies also mean that young people possess knowledge and experience that is unique to their situations and have views and ideas that derive from such experience. They are social actors with skills and capacities to bring about constructive resolutions to their own challenges. Hence, it is legitimate for the youths to contribute to programmes, policies and decision making. In essence, the more opportunities the youths have for meaningful participation, the more experienced and competent they become. Participation for the youths strengthens the commitment to and understanding of human rights and democracy. Since most of the government policy often directly or indirectly has effects on the life of the youths, it is therefore necessary for them to participate in the policy making process. Youth participation should be seen as an essential strategy for ensuring youth's optimal development and for achieving wider development for the entire country. The youths must be recognised and respected as social actors, as agents in their own lives and as citizens of their own societies.

In addition, the National Directorate of Employment introduced certain programmes in the past targeted at the youths. These programmes are directed at helping the youths to acquire productive skills, encourage and assist them to set up and manage their own business. Although, these programmes have not been fully implemented and enough funds not yet provided for such youths who are willing to participate in such programmes, but when it is given adequate attention, it will assist in reducing youth violence in the society. Since unemployment and inadequate incomes push youths into violence, full implementation of these programmes will definitely prevent the youths from involving in youth violence in the country.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to manage or solve the problem of youth violence in Nigeria, the following recommendations are proffered:

- The youth development policy should seek to promote what is referred to as “the prevention of outbreak of violence and the escalation of conflict situations” across the country, and also promote active youth involvement in peace-building and prevention of violence in the country.

- The various arms of government (that is, local, state and federal) must dissociate themselves from all forms of violence and from those who maintain their positions through coercion.
- There should be improvement in the quality of urban management. In other words, those challenges that promote tensions, stresses and conflict in the society must be appropriately addressed.
- More so, youth mobilisation for national development programmes should be introduced into the country. Several activities that target children at different stages should be appropriately spelt out. These should include youth involvement in games, songs, quizzes, camping, debates, workshops and symposia. These activities will assist in training the youths for national development and to avoid participating in youth or any other forms of violence.
- The existing development policies and other programmes in the country must be fully implemented and aimed at reducing poverty and unemployment in the country. Above all, the various structures of violence in the country must also be demolished.

CONCLUSION

The paper defined and explained what youth is, youth violence, factors responsible for youth violence as well as how youth development policy could be used to curb youth violence. The analysis shows that youth violence in Nigeria is as a result of certain factors such as unemployment, poverty, social and moral decadence, culture of drug abuse, ethnic nationalism and the formation of ethnic militias to mention but a few. These violent acts take the forms of murder, cult clashes, armed robbery, theft, bombing, ethnic militancy, intra and inter party clashes and among others. The consequences of youth violence includes among others, increase in youth homicides, increase in youth gangs against the society, lack of peaceful and secured co-existence among members of the Nigerian society.

In order to manage youth violence in Nigeria, the different development policies such as the Nigeria's Youth Entrepreneurship, YouWin, Nigeria Youth Parliament and others should be seen as representing a declaration and commitment of the priorities, directions and practical support that the country intends to provide for the development of the youths. This will definitely reduce the occurrence of youth violence in Nigeria.

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