



## **Socio-economic Causes and Panacea to Youth Restiveness in Rivers State, Nigeria**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Causes and panacea of youth restiveness in Rivers State of Nigeria was analyzed by this study. The random sampling method was used for data collection from 146 respondents. The questionnaire was used for data collection. Data analyses were achieved with frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation. Result showed that 66.4% of the respondents were males. The mean age of the respondents was 28 years. Findings showed that 45.9% of the respondents were unemployed. The major cause of youth restiveness was environmental degradation with the highest mean of 2.00. This was followed by unemployment and corruption with the mean of 1.90 respectively. Major damage caused by restive activities was illegal oil bunkery and oil theft with a mean of 2.8. The most effective panacea for reducing restive activities was provision of skill acquisition and employment opportunities with 49.3% response. This was followed by good governance with 49.0% response. In order to reduce youth restive activities in the state, the study recommends provision of skill acquisition and employment opportunities for the youths. Good governance by the political leadership in the state was also recommended.

**Keywords:** Causes, Panacea, Youth, Restiveness, Rivers State, Nigeria.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Those who are difficult to control as a result of their dissatisfaction with something or somebody are regarded as being restive (Dabesaki, 2002). Restiveness is a state of restlessness and impatience. It is also the

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unwillingness to go forward and the readiness to break from being controlled. Saale (2012) explains that restiveness is the measure of dissatisfaction or displeasure with a system. He added that restiveness in the Niger Delta where Rivers State is located is a display of displeasure with the actions of the Nigerian State.

In explaining the types of restiveness, Dabesaki (2002) adds that restiveness is either constructive or destructive. In constructive restiveness, youths express their grievance in a polite and peaceful way. They resort to dialogue with appropriate authority. The destructive restiveness on the other hand is more of violence and destruction of lives and properties. The latter is the type greatly expressed by youths in many areas of Rivers State. Cases in point were those of the communities of Umuechem and Ogoni in 1990, Bonny in 1992, Nonwa in 1993, Obite in 1998, Choba in 1999 and Ogoni Saga of 2003 (Nlerum, 2012).

Youth restiveness has been on the increase despite the various youth programmes and projects carried out by the government, multinational companies, NGOs, individuals and corporate bodies. These negative and violent activities have affected the economy and security of lives and properties in the state. Various steps have been taken by the government to reduce these violent activities which have proved abortive as the number of restive activities have been on the increase. Anikpo, (2006) provided a clue to the continued existence of restive activities when he noted that over the years there have been youth employment and empowerment programmes through projects organized by federal, state and local governments, down to multinationals existing in host communities, but that they merely existed and therefore made little impact on the youths. There were also local and international NGOs in the state which had programmes to address youth problems and issues. These bodies came up with good and fascinating plans for the youths. He also added that improper co-ordination of these programmes and projects, as well as unorganized plan of activities as a result of unqualified persons handling the key areas have affected genuine efforts in achieving and accomplishing their set goals and objectives for the benefit of youths and the communities at large.

This study seeks to tackle the problem of identifying the main causes of youth restiveness despite the consistent efforts made by both the public and private agencies at putting it to a stop. The research problem of this study was that, although there were speculations as to what could be the causes of youth restiveness in Rivers State, there was need to empirically identify the actual causes of continued youth restiveness. and determine the empirical panacea to the problem among the youths of the study area. In order to address this research problem, the following research questions were raised What are the socio-economic characteristics of the youths in restive areas? What are the causes of youth restiveness in the state? What are the damages caused by youth restiveness in the state, and what panacea should be adopted to ameliorate youth restiveness in the area? In order to tackle the various

research questions, the specific objectives of this study determined the socio-economic characteristic of youths in restive areas; identified the causes of youth restiveness in the state; determined the damages caused by youth restiveness in the state; and identified the panacea of youth restiveness in the area.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study was carried out in Rivers State Nigeria. Rivers State occupies an area of about 30,000 square kilometers and bounded on the south by the Atlantic Ocean, on the North by Anambra, Imo and Abia States, the Eastern part by Akwa Ibom State and the West by Bayelsa and Delta States. A network of creeks spans the riverine south, stretching into the Atlantic Ocean, through Bonny and Opobo. Rivers State has 23 Local Government Area (LGAs) with Port Harcourt as its capital. The inland part of Rivers State consists of tropical rainforest towards the coast. As a typical Niger Delta environment, the State has got many mangrove swamps. Due to the tropical climate, numerous rivers and arable land, the predominant occupation of the people in the state is agriculture which especially is made up of fishing and crop farming. Rivers State is rich in oil and gas deposits. Besides the exploration of oil and gas, the state has other natural resources like timber, white sand beaches, and clay deposits which are used for making ceramics. The names of the major clans in Rivers State include kalabari, Okrika, Ikwerre, Ogbia, Ibani, Nkoro, Engenni, Kula, Udekaama, Ogoni, Obulom and Ogba. Rivers State which is named after the many rivers that border its territory was part of the Oil Rivers Protectorate from 1885 till 1893.

Rivers State has one of the largest economies in Nigeria, mainly because of its crude oil. The state has two major crude oil refineries, namely the Port Harcourt refinery and Eleme petrochemical. There are two major seaports in Rivers State controlled by Nigerian Ports Authority. They are Rivers port at Port Harcourt and Onne port at Onne. The international airport in Rivers State is at Omagwua. The state has various industrial estates and markets spread across it and particularly in the state capital. Tertiary institutions in the state are the University of Port Harcourt, Choba, Rivers State University of Science and Technology Nkpolu-Oroworukwo, Rivers State Polytechnic, Bori, Federal College of Education (Tech.) Omoku, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education at Rumuolumeni. School of Nursing and Midwifery, Rumueme in Port Harcourt, College of Health Science and Technology, Rumueme in Port Harcourt and College of Art and Science, Rumuola, Port Harcourt. The presence of these industries, institutions, ports, refineries, markets, etc made the state a bee hive for youths and youth activities. The natural hospitality of its indigenes and the availability of economic activities made Rivers State a comfortable home for youths from all parts of Nigeria and beyond.

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The population for the study was made up of all youths in Rivers State. According to the 2006 census figures, the estimated population of youths in Rivers State is 3,435,223. The multi-stage sampling involving purposive and random sampling methods were employed. Purposive sampling was used in selecting four LGAs that have had incidence of youth restiveness in the state. Purposive sampling was used to ensure that the youths of communities which were involved in restive activities were included as respondents in the study. The LGAs were Port Harcourt, Obio/Akpor, Okrika, and Asari Toru. Furthermore, four towns were randomly selected from each LGA. The towns were Port Harcourt from Port Harcourt LGA, Okrika from Okrika LGA, Buguma from Asari-Toru LGA and Ozuoba from Obio/Akpor LGA. Forty (40) youths were also randomly selected from each town. This gave an initial total sample size of 160 respondents. The sample size of 160 respondents was not realized due to misplacement of some copies of the questionnaire by some respondents and the inability to reach some of the respondents because of security challenge which was a threat in some locations at the time of the survey. These problems made the actual sample size of the study to be 146 respondents. Descriptive statistics of percentage, the Likert-type rating scale, mean and standard deviation were used in analyzing the data.

The variables of the socio-economic characteristics of youths of restive areas which were age, sex, marital status, educational level and occupation, were measured with percentage and mean. The variables for the causes of youth restiveness, were analyzed with a two-point Likert-type rating scale with serious denoted as 2 and unserious as 1. The cut-off mean of 1.5 was used to interpret the result. Means greater than or equal to 1.5 were interpreted as serious, while those with less than 1.5 were interpreted as unserious. The variables on damages caused by youth restiveness on the society which included loss of lives and properties, kidnapping, insecurity, community-company clashes, unemployment, lack of development, violence and rape, illegal oil bunkering and oil theft were measured with a cut-off mean of 2.00 using the three point Likert-type rating scale. Results with mean of 2.00 and above were interpreted as serious, while those of below 2.00 were interpreted as unserious effect. The variables for panacea of youth restiveness which were skill acquisition and employment, empowerment programmes, good governance, scholarship, adolescent trainings, amnesty, youth rehabilitation and reintegration, proper home training, favourable youth policies were measured with percentage (%).

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Table 1 shows that 25.3% of the respondents were within the age range of 25.29 years, while 21.9% and 22.6% were within the ages of 20.24 and 30-34

years respectively. The mean age of the respondents was 28 years indicating that they were mainly youths. This mean age is close to the finding of the study of Nlerum and Okorie (2012) which showed that youths are young people with a mean of 24 years.

**Table 1:** Percentage Distribution of Socio-economic Characteristics of Youths in Restive Communities of Rivers State.

	Frequency	Percentage(%)	Mean
<b>Age</b>			
Less than 15	3	2.1	
15 – 19	13	8.9	
20 – 24	32	21.9	
25 – 29	37	25.3	
30 – 34	33	22.6	
More than 35	28	19.2	
Total	146	100.0	28 years
<b>Sex</b>			
Male	97	66.4	
Female	49	33.6	
Total	146	100.0	
<b>Marital Status</b>			
Single	64	43.8	
Married	67	45.9	
Widow(er)	9	6.2	
Divorced	6	4.1	
Total	146	100.0	
<b>Educational level</b>			
No education	12	8.2	
Primary	17	11.6	
Secondary	45	30.8	
Diploma	31	21.2	12.5 years
Graduate	32	21.9	
Post Graduate	9	6.2	
Total	146	100.0	
<b>Occupation</b>			
Student	23	15.8	
Unemployed	67	45.9	
Self-employed	38	26.0	
Employed	14	9.6	
Others	4	2.7	
Total	146	100.00	

**Source:** Field Survey Data 2013.

The implication of this finding is that restive youths are young and it further implies that empowerment programmes for them will be of immense help. It also revealed that majority (66.4%) of the respondents were males, while

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33.6% were females. The implication of this finding is that the males participate more in youth restive activities than the females.

The result further indicates that 45.9% of the respondents were already married. This finding tend to suggest a steady rise in the population of the study area since these youths are likely to have children and even more as they advance to higher adulthood stages. The finding also implies that the youths are already exposed to responsibilities. Caring for children at the youth stage of their lives in the presence of the current hard economy of Nigeria may have been responsible for their involvement in restive activities. This is in view of the fact that they should provide for the needs of their family members.

The finding also shows that the highest level of education among the youths was secondary level as indicated by 30.8% of the respondents. Graduate and diploma certificate holders accounted for 21.9% and 21.2% respectively. The average number of years spent in schooling among restive youths in the area was 12.5 years. This result means that restive youths have got basic education that can qualify them for employment. The finding also connotes that most youths who got involved in restive activities are fairly educated. The fact that 8.2% of the respondents have not attempted any form of formal education even with the current emphasis by the Millennium Development Goals on education by the end of 2015 is negatively remarkable (Nlerum and Okorie, 2012).

The result also shows that 45.9% of the respondents were unemployed, while 38.3% had a form of employment and another. This result connotes that the level of unemployment among the respondents was high. This may be the major reason youth restiveness is persisting in the study area. The result further implies that nearly a half of the respondents were jobless. The study agrees with that of Egbe et al, (1994) that the prevailing high incidences of social disorders are poverty and unemployment induced. Table 2 revealed that environmental degradation has the highest mean o 2.00 and it is therefore the most serious cause of youth restiveness in the state. The occurrence of oil exploration and exploitation activities led to environmental degradation. This finding agrees with the assertion of Amanyie (2006) that oil and gas exploitations which brought about pollution and acid rain were the cause of youth restiveness in Niger Delta rural areas. The effect of environmental degradation has left farmlands, rivers and wells polluted resulting to restive activities from youths who are energetic and active in expressing dissatisfaction in the state. This problem increased poverty among the people and the quest for resource control to compensate for the sufferings caused by oil exploration and oil spillages. This study agreed with Egbe et al, (1994) that the reoccurring incidence of kidnap, pipeline vandalism and others are the direct consequences of the environmentally destructive activities of oil corporations. The finding also agreed with the study of Saale (2012) which revealed that pollution and other factors were sources of stress in communities that resulted into restive activities.

**Table 2:** Causes of youth restiveness in Rivers State.

Factors	Mean	Standard Deviation	Decision
Poverty	1.85	72.12	Serious
Inadequate funding	1.33	35.35	Unserious
Unemployment	1.90	79.19	Serious
Resource control	1.77	53.03	Serious
Corruption	1.90	79.19	Serious
Political thuggery	1.86	73.53	Serious
Insensitivity of government	1.82	66.46	Serious
Insensitivity of oil companies	1.80	62.22	Serious
Favoritism	1.58	15.55	Serious
Indiscipline and Cultism	1.82	65.05	Serious
Abandoned programmes and projects	1.82	66.46	Serious
Environmental degradation	2.00	89.09	Serious

Source: Field survey 2013, Cut-off mean=1.50.

Unemployment and corruption were the second major causes of youth restiveness in the area with a mean of 1.90 each. This implies that these two factors were serious causes of youth restiveness. These results agreed with the study of Ojeifo, (2013) which showed that youth and graduate unemployment were causes of restive activities in Nigeria. Political thuggery accounted for the mean of 1.86 and was therefore a serious cause of youth restiveness in the area. This finding agreed with that of Albert et al, (2013) that the use of youths for election purposes by politicians and cultism were the main causes of militancy and youth restiveness in Degema and Akuru-Toru Local Government Areas of Rivers State, Nigeria. Table 3 shows that all the studied variables on the damages caused by youth restiveness in the area had means which were greater than 2.0 and were therefore serious effects. Illegal oil bunkering and oil theft with a mean score of 2.8 was identified as the major damage of youth restiveness in the state. The next serious damages were loss of lives and properties and kidnapping and armed-robbery with the means of 2.6 each. The activities of restive youths in the state have caused loss of lives and properties of the people. Kidnapping of innocent people for ransom and armed robbery with the aim of making quick money were alarming. As a result of these negative effects, some companies have redeployed to other states and even out of Nigeria.

The next serious damages were insecurity and destruction of towns and villages with the means of 2.5 each. The findings agreed with that of Albert et al, (2013) which revealed that insecurity was among the major effects of youth restiveness and militancy in the state. This result also agrees with Anikpo (2005) in the study of Niger Delta which revealed that there were at least 1,500 deaths a year, 20,000 to 100,000 internally displaced persons yearly, lack of investment due to insecurity and subsequent huge oil revenue losses to the Federal Government of Nigeria.

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**Table 3:** Damages caused by Youth Restiveness in Rivers State.

Damages	Mean score	Standard deviation	Decision
Insecurity	2.5	40.52	Serious
Loss of lives and properties	2.6	44.24	Serious
Community/Oil company clashes	2.3	22.03	Serious
Increase of unemployment/joblessness	2.4	28.71	Serious
Deployment of companies to other states	2.0	2.51	Serious
Reduced income and revenue of government and companies	2.4	31.78	Serious
Lack of development	2.4	32.31	Serious
Pipeline vandalisation	2.3	20.51	Serious
Assassination and murder	2.4	43.55	Serious
Intimidation	2.3	28.36	Serious
Denial of human right	2.4	28.78	Serious
Violence and rape	2.4	31.78	Serious
Kidnapping and armed robbery	2.6	45.09	Serious
Increase in petroleum prices	2.2	18.82	Serious
Illegal oil bunkering and oil theft	2.8	19.39	Serious
Communal conflicts	2.4	39.31	Serious
Destruction of towns and villages	2.5	3808	Serious

Source: Field survey 2010, Cut-off mean = 2.0.

Table 4 shows that youth restiveness would be majorly reduced by the provision of skill acquisition and employment programmes as it had the highest result of 49.3%. This result agreed with that of Albert et al, (2013) which revealed that provision of social amenities and skill acquisition programmes would reduce restive activities in Degema and Akuku-Toru Local Government Areas.

**Table 4:** Panacea for Youth Restiveness in Rivers State, Nigeria (n=146).

Programmes/Projects	Frequency	Percentage(%)
Adolescent trainings	66	45.2
Scholarship	59	40.4
Entrepreneurship education	69	47.3
Cleanup of oil spillage	42	28.8
Youth rehabilitation and reintegration	37	25.3
Proper home training	26	17.8
Good governance	70	48.0
Empowerment programmes	45	30.8
Skills acquisition and employment	72	49.3
Funding for small enterprise	31	21.2
Amnesty	12	8.2
Workable youth policies	29	19.9

Source: Field survey, 2013, \*Multiple responses were used.



The result also agreed with the study of Ofehe (2006) which revealed that job creation and training scheme for youths will reduce youth restiveness in Niger Delta. Provision of skills and employment will empower the youths financially. This will reduce poverty and prevent them from being idle. This is because youths who are economically busy would be less prone to restive activities.

The next panacea is good governance with 48.0% response. Good governance comes with national development, security and great future for its people. This result agreed with that of Anasi (2010) which indicated that bad governance cannot bring growth and development. The third panacea is entrepreneurship education with 47.3% response. Educating the youths on setting up enterprises and businesses will enhance income generation. This study agreed with Egbe et al, (1994) that gainful employment and entrepreneurship empowerment are alternatives that would resuscitate economies of youths.

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Socio-economically, restive youths in Rivers State were more of males than females, of the mean age of 28 years, and slightly educated. A good proportion of them were unemployed. The major cause of youth restiveness was environmental degradation from the numerous chains of oil exploration activities and gas flare experienced in the state. The major damages caused by youth restive activities were illegal oil bunkering and oil thefts and loss of lives and properties followed by kidnapping and armed robbery. Primary panacea to youth restiveness in the area is the provision of skill acquisition and employment programmes. The second is good governance and followed by entrepreneurship education for youths. The study recommends genuine efforts of stakeholders at addressing the problems of youth unemployment, environmental degradation, youth skill acquisition and corrupt governance by leaders in Rivers State.

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