

Exploring Conflict Management Strategies in Resolving Political Violence among the Youth in Rivers State

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigated conflict management strategies in resolving political violence among the youths in River State of Nigeria. The State has witnessed unabated political violence in recent years. It has challenged policy makers and stakeholders over the years. Political violence has created a near state of anarchy in the state and distorted the political will and political culture of the citizens of the state. This paper argues that conflict management approach that features the principles of dialogue and youth empowerment presents a credible alternative path towards resolving political violence among the youth which on the other hand will foster tranquility, equity and development in the State. The study recommended that the youth matters should be incorporated in the annual budget of the State to empower them to take active part in the political activities that matter to the youths. This will bring about peaceful coexistence among the citizens and reduce political violence to the barest minimum.

Keywords: Youth, violence, Political Violence, Causes, Conflict management Strategies. Concept of Youth

INTRODUCTION

No society can achieve its desired goals and objectives where conflict and violence is order of the day. Unfortunately, youth political violence has eaten deep into the fabrics of the developmental structures of the State due to lapses emanating from the system of governance. Duke (2011) asserted that years of deprivation and the failure of government to address the problems and grievances of youths have culminated in deep-seated suspicion, apathy towards civic responsibility, open hostilities to guest business organizations and a resort to criminal activities including kidnapping, armed robbery and vandalism. The author reiterated that it is unfortunately that these have all had negative outcomes for the people of the area, who have lost economically, socially and politically in the scheme of things as a result. Organizations are made up of different people with different attitude, beliefs, abilities and personality, therefore conflict is inevitable (Uwa, 2014). The author stated further that there is no organization that can effectively carry out its day to day activities without encountering some form of violence or conflict. Therefore,

violence and conflict are the commonest, general and wide-spread phenomenon that is synonymous with group activity and interaction.

Therefore, it is against this above background and the fact many scholars have carried out studies concerning political violence that this study specifically explores conflict management strategies in resolving political violence among the youths in River State.

The word youth has been perceived in different dimensions by several scholars. First it is the time in life when a person is young, usually between childhood and adulthood (maturity). Again, an individual's maturity may not correspond to his chronological age, as immature individuals can be found at all ages. Accordingly, youth may be defined through an individual's personal experience especially in terms of his cultural background and perspectives, and his level of dependency that is the extent to which he still relies on his family emotionally and economically. It is on this experiential perspective that Dahl (2004) defined youth as a period of transition from the dependence or a person between the ages of learning compulsory education and finding their

first job. Kloskowska (2000) viewed youth as youthfulness as an abstract construct of such characteristics as the quality of being young and evincing peculiar trait subject to social evaluation. Importantly, youth has long been contentious designation with most emphases in sociology on gene rationalism, ageism and specificity (Wulff, 2000).

Youth" is often regarded as a state of becoming, necessary partway to adulthood. The age category of youth can extend from thirteen to twenty-five years especially in the western world (Miles, 2000) but mostly extended to late thirties to thirty-five in African society due to delayed in transitional phase from youth to adulthood. Age classification of youth is often done for institutional and policy purposes. Another defining characteristic of youth is done in relation to models of behaviour. Across several disciplines there is growth in the tendency to view youth as out of control and as a threat to both society and themselves. Viewed from the context of moral panic, youth have often been read as dangerous from media representation and become an object of spectacle and desire for mass audience (Oswell, 2000). Irrespective of the diverse dimensions, youth have been conceptualized, the definition central to current discourse take into account the socio-historic and dynamic dimension that affect the experience of being youth.

This study also utilize the age bracket of 18 – 35 to define youth, stressing that "this category represents the most active, the most volatile, and yet the most vulnerable segment of the population, socio-economically and in other respects (National Youth Policy, 2001). Angulu (2000) considered persons within the age range of 6-36 years as youth. Other scholars like Oluwadare (2004) and (Olajire and Olufunke, 2013) employed the age bracket of 15-30 to define youth. It is also helpful to add that progressive-mindedness is one of the defining characteristics of youth. Therefore, the current thinking is that people beyond the age of 36 who share the ideals of a progressive society are also considered as youth (Uhunmwuangho and Oghotor, 2013). Whatever the age limit, youth are men and women considered to be young, energetic, vibrant and resourceful, who are often engaged in social enterprises that requires physical strength and mental capacity (Suleiman, 2006). Ejiogu (2001) maintained that person who is aged between 17 and 20 years is a

youth. The Federal Government of Nigeria (2001), Oluwadare (2004) and (Olajire and Olufunke, 2013) considered youth as a person within the age bracket of 10 to 24 years as youths. World Bank (1999 and 2007) a youth is a person between the age of 15 and 29 years. For statistical purposes, the United Nations (1995; 2007 and 2010) defined youth as individuals between the ages of 15 and 24. According to United Nations, youth do not constitute a homogeneous group; their socio-economic, demographic and geographical situations vary widely both within and between regions. Notwithstanding these differences, regional-level analysis provides a general understanding of their development profile. About 87 percent youths live in developing countries and face challenges deriving from limited access to resources, education, training, employment, and broader economic development opportunities (United Nations Programme on Youth, 2011). Youth is considered by Conflict Management and Mitigation (2005) as a time of passage between childhood and adulthood, or as "biological markers, between the period of puberty and parenthood. There is a gross lack of consensus on the meaning of a youth and many factors come into play in the search for a working definition. The golden thread here appears to be that dependency and independence are defining extremes for any approach to the meaning of a youth. Nweke (2015) viewed youth as a victim of social change and at best an endangered species. Youth simply refers to a young person between childhood and adulthood. It is a transition period between adolescent and adulthood. The author contended that there is no consensus regarding the age bracket of a youth inasmuch as often the person can engage in social change and enterprises that requires physical strength and mental capacity of development. Definition of youth perhaps changes with circumstances, especially with the changes in demographic, financial, economic and socio-cultural settings. However, the definition that uses 15- 24 age cohort as youth fairly serves its statistical purposes for assessing the needs of the young people and providing guidelines for youth development. In the context of this study, youth could be seen as young people who are between the age range of 14 and 24 years, who are full of agility and strength and sometimes more disruptive and violent in nature.

CONCEPT OF VIOLENCE

The term violence has been defined in many perspectives by several scholars. Dahlberg and Krug (2002) defined violence as the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against another person or against a group or community that results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development, or deprivation. Similarly, Earl (2004) defined violence as the use of physical force by an individual, group or organization resulting in injury or abuse to others. In line with the above assertions, Apam (2006) opined that violent conflicts generally arise from the pursuit of divergent goals and aspirations by individuals and or groups in defined social and physical environments. They are regarded as struggles over values and claims to scarce status, power and resources in which the aim of the opponents are to neutralize, conjure or eliminate their rivals. Buttressing the above points, the author maintained that violence in societies are also designed to resolve divergent dualism and to achieve some kind of unity even if it were through the annihilation of one of the conflicting parties and should not therefore be regarded only in the negative or dysfunctional or disjunctive process or a breakdown of communication. Justifying the above views, Anih (2014) asserted that violence can also be defined as a threatening tactics imposed to destabilize and harm other individuals. In the context of this study, violence is the acts of perpetuating conflict through physical force to brutalize and inflict pains and injuries on individuals and destruction of properties. Violence may be in form of political violence.

POLITICAL VIOLENCE

Political violence is a canker worm to any organization or nation that experiences it. It breaches good governance and development. Guri, in New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), (2003) perceived political violence as collective attacks within a political community against the political regime, its actors-including competing political groups, as well as incumbent – or its policies. Contributing, Howell (2004) stated that political violence is synonymous with 'thuggery' activities and means 'brutal' acts or behaviours by ruffians. Karl Schmit in Schaefer, (2011) averred that political violence is generally abnormal act and a disturbance to political

equilibrium. According to Denen and Grace (2013), political violence is the use of destructive means or methods in an unlawful manner against persons, property, institutions, in order to publicize grievances, coerce or intimidate a government, opponents, the civilian population, in furtherance of political, socio-economic, religious objectives.

Citizens of Nigeria are no longer at ease at the frequent news of political violence among the youths in our institutions of higher learning and in the society at large. Tenansi (2000) opined that youths violence have become a regular phenomenon in Nigeria. It has come to be regarded as associated to institutional administration. This is because unlike before youths have become more involved in local, national and international issues. Interestingly most people agreed that youth violence is a serious social problem especially in Nigerian society due to their notion to harm and kill others. Such actions brake social norms (by violating the law) and causing insecurity. They threatened the country's social order, and they attack government security agents especially the police, community members and others. As such, well meaning Nigerians, should see youth violence in this nation, as the biggest part of the general problem facing this country and River State in particular. Youth violence, according to Rogers (2001) does not only harm the victims but also harm the family, friends and disrupts the peace in the local community. In the context of this study, political violence could be seen as a destructive act perpetuated by some youths to maim, disturb and to disrupt the political activities of a certain state thereby breaching the principles of development and peaceful coexistence among the inhabitants of such state. From the foregoing, it is therefore suspected that several factors may have been responsible for the rate of political violence among the youths in River State.

CAUSES OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE

Political violence is perpetuated by several factors. According to Wyrick (2006), violent youths who have violent parents are far more likely to take mode of their parents' behaviour. In the opinion of Dawes (2007), two developmental factors for the onset of youth violent behaviour include, one in which violence begins in childhood (before puberty) and continues into adolescence and one in which violence begins in youths. Other factors such as,

serious exposure of children to television and film violence have been confirmed accordingly that majority of violent youths offenders use alcohol and illicit drugs. This implies that exposure of youths to media which display visuals such as war films, conflict films rubbery films among others are liable to learn and become expert in perpetuating violence which metamorphoses into political violence. Justifying the above view, Alert (2010) brought up two different approaches to youth violence development. Firstly, one that focuses on the onset of violent behaviour and its frequency, patterns and its continuity over the live course. And the one that focuses on the emergence of risk factors at different stages of the life course. On this regards, one can ask what the causes of political violence among the youth are. There can be no political violence among the youths without some related factors predisposing it. These factors may be traceable to the government administrations, parents, the society, universities and the youth themselves. Supporting this point, Kayode citing El-Rufai, (2012), attributed political violence in Nigeria to failure of governments at all levels in applying states' revenues on improving the welfare of citizens. Instead, the federal allocation funds, and the IGR combined are spent on running their governments (El Rufai – Nigerian village square, 25th July, 2012). They work with government in power (dictatorship or democracy). Will do anything by any possible means to oppress and marginalize the civil society with a view to preventing them access to power and economic resources.

This way they nurture corruption as a way of retaining continuous control; corruption has enjoyed great legitimacy, and completely undermined government/public socio-economic development structures and international image, entrenchment of massive poverty and reckless extortion, which has become a feature of Nigerian Federation today-in hospitals, schools, and high ways. These kinds of practices create resentment and cynicism, which burst into violence at the slightest provocation (Kayode, 2012). Aminu (2000) argued that the remote cause of the youth's violence must be found in the general ills of the society. Buttressing the above point, the author reiterated that the political violence among the youths activities have always involved damages of diverse magnitude, some of which are serious dimensions involving irreparable and

irreplaceable damages which range from loss of lives, properties, industrial establishments, and commercial centres. Other factors such as, serious exposure of children to television and film violence have been confirmed accordingly that majority of violent youths offenders use alcohol and illicit drugs. World Education (2005) opined that schools located in socially disorganized neighbourhoods are more likely to have a high rate of violence. WHO (2002) enumerated the following to be the factors for youth violence; Individual factors. The principle personality and behavioural factors linked with youth violence are: Hyper activity impulsiveness, poor behavioural control attention problems, history of early aggressive behaviour, low educational achievement. Influences by family and peers. The home environments are keys to the development of violent behaviour in young people. Some of the key family factors associated with adolescent violence are: poor supervision of children by parents and harsh physical punishment to discipline children parental conflict in early childhood low level of attachment between parents and children, a mother who had her first child at an early age experiencing parental separation or divorce at a young age. The low levels of family cohesion and low socio-economic status of the family. Contributing to this trend Roger, (2009) identified social problems as one of the causes of political violence. Social problems at different levels of group inequality and youths unemployment have increased the propensity for violence. The dominant discourses in the conflicts refer to political exclusion on the basis of ethnicity and religion. In a related view, Raul (2004) identified poor economic condition and lack of economic opportunities, to favour political violence.

Others include associating with delinquent peers has also been linked to violence in young people. Social, political and cultural factors, gangs and a local supplied of guns and drugs area potent mixture, increasing the likelihood of youth violence. Low levels of social cohesion within a community have been linked to higher rates of youth violence. The quality of a country's governance, its laws and the extent to which they are enforced as well as policies for social protection has an important effect on violence. Factors such as income inequality, rapid demographic changes in the youth population, and urbanization have all been

positively linked with youth violence. Cultures that do not provide non-violent alternatives for resolving conflicts appear to have higher rates of youth violence. James (2006) stated that violence is often pursued as an antidote to shame or humiliation. Buttressing further, James stated that the use of violence often is a source of pride and a defense of honor, especially among males who often believe violence defined manhood. Similarly, Daly, Martin, and Margo (2008) stated that evolutionary psychology offers several explanations for human violence in various contexts, such as sexual jealousy in human, child abuse, and homicide. Corroborating the above point, Goetz (2010) argued that humans are similar to most mammal species and use violence in specific situations. Buttressing his point, Goetz stated that most homicides seem to start from relatively trivial disputes between unrelated men who then escalate to violence and death. The author further argued that such conflicts occur when there is a status dispute between men of relatively similar status. If there is a great initial status difference, then the lower status individual usually offers no challenge and if challenged the higher status individual usually ignores the lower status individual. At the same an environment of great inequalities between people may cause those at the bottom to use more violence in attempts to gain status. As emphasized by Counselling Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (COECD). (2012) that violence in youths can also be caused by frustration due to learning disorders, emotional distress, or attention deficits and that when the youths have access to the tools necessary for a violent plan, the chances of the youth violent is real. For example a youth having access to guns and other weapons like knives and rifle, use of alcohol and tobacco products these are also identified by Dawes (2007) as primary cause of youth violence. The author discovered that inadequate monitoring, supervision, lack of parental discipline are risk factors for youth violence.

In view of this, various governments and organizations in many countries including Nigeria have made many reasonable efforts to curb the menace of violence but it has not yielded permanent solution to the cankerworms of these vices. Following the above assertion, motives for committing political violence may be economic--like poverty, economic recession or inequality--or political--like lack of

democracy, absence of minority representation or self-governance. Most of the literature on political violence among the youth arguably falls into this tradition. It focuses on how large youth cohorts facing institutional crowding in the labour market or educational system, lack of political openness, and crowding in urban centres may be aggrieved, paving the way for political violence (Goldstone, 2001). It is in this light that Nwokoma (2005) in an attempt at the determinants of political violence in Nigeria implicated the high rate of unemployment and poverty as the main determinants of political violence in the country. Stressing further, Nwokoma stated that the chronic shortage of employment opportunities gave the politicians the leverage or influence to mobilize the unemployed youths for personal and parochial purposes. Available statistics show that many of the unemployed youths turned into trained militant sects to intimidate, harass and assassinate political opponents. From the above highlighted causes of political violence among the youths, it is also observed that youth's involvement in political violence in River State is as result of negligent of matters concerning the welfare of the youths. Such areas of negligent as experienced and observed include non empowerment of the youths, failure of the government to establish skill acquisition centres for the youths for entrepreneurship programmes. Others include using of the youths by politicians to secure political power during election and dumping them after elections and poverty which inhibits parents from training their children and wards among others. The rate of political violence in many communities in River State is therefore worrisome and devastating. It seems to have brought about down turn to economic, social and political activities of the state and imposed a great threat to lives of the inhabitants of the state.

EFFECT OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE

Youth violence has immediate and long term consequences, which include physical, psychological and social. From the foregoing, the above highlighted political violence among the youths may have a disastrous implication on socio-economic development of the country and River State in particular. Oluwagbohunmi (2012) noted that violence has become a problem of great national and international concern because of its socio-economic developmental consequences. Stressing further, the author stated that Nigeria is currently facing

several socio-economic and political problems which range from rural-urban migration, environmental pollution, deforestation, collapse infrastructure in the area of road and electricity supply, acute poverty and cyber crime among others as caused by violence and terrorist activities. The effect of violence crimes and terrorist activities on economic development of Nigeria has increased tremendously. Therefore, it becomes an issue of concern to all individual, government and corporate organization (Patrick & Akpan, 2012).

The economic implications of violence and terrorism in Nigeria can be seen in different perspectives. The increasing state of violence in Nigeria is alarming and shocking, “in recent times there has been much concern about Nigeria’s survival as a nation, since the return of democracy in 1999, there has been a drift from one violent conflict to another, often with devastating consequences on human life and socio-economic development” (Ekweremadu in Adeyemi, 2009). Justifying the above point, Anih (2014) opined that it is quite pathetic to every right thinking Nigerian the alarming rate of political violence, religious violence, Boko Haram terrorist group and the nefarious militancy group, the disaster it have unleashed to every aspect of the society especially on the socio-economic development. Nigerian economy has suffered unabated set back as a result of violence and terrorism in its developmental processes. Supporting the above view, Denen (2013) averred that business people suffer serious losses as a result of political violence. Others move their businesses elsewhere, which are a serious blow on the economy of the affected state, city, community. Any where there is a bomb blast or any terrorist attack people do not feel safe thereby restrict themselves from moving or travelling to such areas (Tosini, 2009). Counselling Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (COECD) (2012) opined that youth violence does not only contribute greatly to the global burden of premature death, imprisonments, injury and disability, it also has a serious lifelong impact on behaviour, psychological and social functioning of victims, families, friends and communities. From the above effects of political violence on the aforementioned and its devastating effects on lives and property there is need for the articulation of requisite conflict management strategies in resolving political violence in the

society so as to avert subsequent or future occurrences.

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

In order to fully internalize the meaning of conflict management strategies, it is pertinent to vividly emphasize on the words conflict and management. Conflict occurs when two people differ on their values or beliefs. Conflict manifests in the form of fights, struggle or quarrels over something. It may also be something in opposition or disagreement with self or some other persons or groups. Thus, conflict can classify conflict into two areas; Intra-personal or inter-personal. Intrapersonal conflict comes within the individual in the form of indecisions, thoughts, choices and interest, manifesting in the person's inability to make decisions and choices. Inter-personal conflict on the other hand involves two or more persons, groups, communities and or nations and between a group and a nation (Edeghonghon, 2007). According to Ifeanyi and Peters (2006), “conflict is a situation in which people, groups or countries are involved in serious disagreements or arguments. Conflict is a necessary process of life ...”. This opinion does not mean that conflict cannot be managed. In fact, if properly handled can bring a positive change in the original situation, and bring lasting peace. Similarly, conflict situation that is not properly handled could degenerate into violence and crises, gender violence kidnapping and youth restiveness which are currently witnessed in River State of Nigeria. Conflict ensues when someone is not performing well as expected or inability to meet up to a certain target as expected. (Onongha, 2015). This means that inability to measure up to expectation in a certain agreement between groups of individual could trigger conflict. Conflicts on the side of youth happens when parents, government are not providing the emotional support adolescents want, or because parents believe adolescents are not meeting the expectations held for them (Flannery, 2013). This implies that as an adolescent always wants to decide what he needs and yet has superiors who have rules and expectations for him to conform with, could stir conflict. The above problem therefore calls for conflict management and resolution.

Management is the organizational process that includes strategic planning setting, objectives, managing resources, deploying the human of financial assets needed to achieve objectives and

measuring results. According to Fayol (2007), management is an act of forecasting, planning, organizing, controlling, commanding and coordinating. The author fathered the human behavioural school of thought; he was the first to look at management as a total and universal activity separate from the managerial activity of a business enterprise or government agency. In defining management, other authors have adopted to definition five by Fayol. For instance, Breech (2000) defined management as a social process. According to the author, the process consists of planning, control, coordination and motivation. In a similar way, a more recent definition of management was given by Koontz and Doman (2002) which depicts management as an operational process initially best dissected by analyzing the managerial functions. According to the authors, the five essential managerial functions are: planning, organizing, staff, directing and leading, and controlling. Nwachukwu (2009) perceived management as the co-ordination of all the resources of an organization through the process of planning, organizing, directing and controlling in order to attain organizational objectives. The author reiterated that management is the supervising, controlling, and coordinating of activity to attain optimum results with organizational resources. Two things are evident in the above definitions: organizational objectives and organizational resources. The managers are saddled with the task of accomplishing organizational objectives with organizational resources. It is only when these objectives are attained with available resources that the management can be called a prudent manager. This implies that in order to fully utilize resources of the youths in societal development devoid of violence, there is need to ensure that youth welfare are well managed and taking care of. Akpan (2004) defined management as the process of harnessing the resources of an organization (or society) with a view to achieving a desired result. Central to the definition of management is the idea of achieving desired objectives through the effort of other people. Buttressing the above point, the author noted that the work of any management involves setting in advance the objectives to be accomplished and creating a conducive environment for people committed to those

objectives to strive heartily towards their accomplishment.

The above citation expresses the need for proper management procedure so as to achieve a desired result. The government can put a machinery of conflict management strategies to harness the actions of the youth towards achieving a desired result. Conflict management refers to attempt to control or regulate conflict through a number of measures. Conflict management strategies refer to the internal mechanisms used by the various authorities in resolving conflict (Adeyemi & Ademilua, 2012). Constructively managed conflict induces a positive performance while poorly managed conflict heats up the environment to bring about 'dislocation of the entire group and polarization, reduced productivity on job performance, psychological and physical injury, emotional distress and inability to sleep, interference with problem activities, escalation of differences into antagonistic position and malice and increased hostility (Akanji, 2005). Through an effective conflict management, a cooperative atmosphere is created to promote opportunities and movements are directed towards non-violent, reconciliation or basic clashing interest (Uchendu, Anijaobi and Odigwe, 2013). In the context of this study, management could be seen as a medium through which youth exuberance restiveness and agility can be harnessed for productivity and usefulness through youth empowerment scheme.

CONCEPT OF YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

The word empowerment connotes support gained by an individual. Empowerment is the ability to take effective control of oneself or one's life in terms of being well informed and equipped with education, finance, and relevant skills. It is also the ability to take decision and to act on such decision without any external hindrances (Urom, 2002). Supporting the above point, Okpoko (2002) stated that empowerment is a term which has its root in power. Stressing further, the author reiterated that to empower means to give power or authority to enable a person gain power to be able to take decision by oneself. Empowerment implies that the person being empowered has hitherto lacked power or authority, either by default or denial. Justifying the above points, Ugwu (2015) viewed empowerment as the ability to take decision and act on it without hindrance due to the support gained by an individual. Youth could be

empowered to enable them eschew nefarious and violence acts.

Youth Empowerment is an attitudinal, structural and cultural process whereby young people gain ability, authority and agency to make decisions and implement change in their own lives and the lives of other people including adults (Valrus & Fletcher, 2006). Youths are empowered when they acknowledge that they have or can create choices of life, are aware of the implications of these choices, make an informed decision and accept responsibility for the consequences of those actions. Empowerment is one of the means of creating employment for youth. According to Fletcher (2005) youth empowerment is a means of creating and supporting enabling conditions under which young people can act on their own behalf, and on their own terms, rather than at the direction of others. Nweke (2015) posited that youth empowerment simply means to assist the youth to overcome the difficulties which might prevent them from achieving their potentials. Similarly, Omotere (2011) defined youth empowerment as a process whereby young people gain the ability and authority to make decisions and implement change in their own lives. The author further explained that youth empowerment can be exercised at homes, schools, through youth organizations, Non-Governmental Organizations, government policy-making, and community organizing campaigns.

It ranges from economic empowerment to social, ideological, educational, technological and political empowerment which leads to manpower development of a nation. Uzochukwu (2009) defined youth empowerment as the means through which the youths are assisted to succeed in life. According to the author, it is shameful that when youth empowerment is mentioned, people think that it is only the function and responsibilities of the government to empower the youths. Youth empowerment is of good importance to both individuals, community, nations and the empowered. With youth empowerment, the future prosperity of nations is secured because these are the people that are, and will take care of many offices and functions in the country. Youth empowerment also involves a collective, democratic, and pro-social process of engagement, which implies group interaction (Cargo, Grams, Ottoson, Ward, & Green 2003; Jennings, 2006). Consequently, it is also exclusively has to do with one-on-one youth development interventions.

In a study carried out by Uzochukwu (2009) youth empowerment can be grouped into five, such as: financial youth empowerment, skills acquisition youth empowerment, academic youth empowerment, moral youth empowerment, and Agricultural youth empowerment. This segment of youth empowerment is likely to be the most popular. All and sundry know more on this category. It is the type that the youth is offered some cash to start-up a business or to solve his or her problems. Example of this type of youth empowering organization obtainable in Nigeria is YouWIN. What is YouWIN? YouWIN stands for Youth Enterprise with Innovative program. It is a youth empowerment competition mapped out by the Federal Republic of Nigeria to support the youths financially in order to achieve their goals in life. It is an innovative business plan competition aimed at job creation by encouraging and supporting aspiring entrepreneurial youths in Nigeria to develop and execute business ideas. This has sent unemployment among some Nigerian graduates to exile to some extent. In fact, this has transformed some of their lives from rags to riches. This program has put smile on the faces of many Nigerian youths as many are able to make things up with the help offered by this organization. There are many organizations that empower the youths of their nations financially. Also, individuals from many communities offer financial empowerment to members of their communities. It is in line with the above assertion that this present study suggests youth empowerment as a veritable tool in conflict management in River State. This empowerment may be in terms of grant to youths who are willing to pursue educational courses.

The proportion of educated people in Africa is less because many who are willing to go to school are not empowered. Some crimes committed in many African nations are by the illiterates. This bad behaviour spoils the image of many nations. Education is vital for poverty reduction and Nation building. Educational youth empowerment involves giving academic support to the youths of all nations. These supports can both be developed by the government and the individuals. It can take the form of Scholarships and issuing of cheques to the youths who are willing to study. Does Nigeria government sponsor education sector very well? Does the Federal government of

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Nigeria empower the youths through education? (Uzochukwu, 2009).

Nations are still in existence because there is availability of foods. Remove food from the life of a man, and he will appear like a dry tree that has all its roots cut off. Youth Initiative for Sustainable Agriculture (YISA) is an Agro-knowledge based Organization of young graduates of Agricultural discipline and other Youths interested in Agriculture, located in Nigeria, and this organization empower the Nigerian youths to promote agriculture (Uzochukwu, 2009).

Youth empowerment can help reduce the poverty standard of any nation. The question may be how? When any youth is empowered financially, he uses the profit he makes from the business to sustain himself and his household. He may start-up businesses for his relations who were poor before and if this continues to grow to some extent, poverty will be eradicated from that vicinity. Empowering the youths with skills can go a long way in reducing poverty percentage of many societies. When a youth learns skills, he can use the skills learnt to feed, assist others, and even invest for future use. One kind of long lasting empowerment is skills empowerment. The skill one learnt can assist him till the end of his life. A youth who is empowered on how to repair automobiles can earn from it till he dies (Uzochukwu, 2009).

The security departments of many nations have the youth as the larger number. This is because the youths are full of energy and ability. They are always ready to confront challenges. The truth of the matter is that the youths were empowered before they picked security functions. When the youths are empowered, the spirit of patriotism increases in them and that is the reasons that make them security young men. Think of how the army department of many nations will be without the youths. Youth empowerment results to national protection. When youths are trained on security skills, the affairs of nations are protected. Also, with the empowerment, Law offenders are brought to book (Uzochukwu, 2009).

From the above outlines of types of youth empowerment, it is imperative to note here that no nation can do without empowering their youths. This is so because the youths of today are elders of tomorrow. From the above outlines, it is also importance to note that youth

empowerment programmes is every body's function (Uzochukwu, 2009).

CONCEPT OF EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMMES

Empowerment programmes refers to the systematic, planned and organized programmes intended to improve the life of individuals or a group through the provisions of knowledge and relevant skills that would enhance their competence to accomplish the tasks which the education program required or aimed at (Indabawa & Mpofu, 2006). Therefore, through empowerment programmes, the youths can acquire skills and developmental activities for the betterment of their families and give way for upcoming young ones.

Empowerment Programmes is defined by Blanchard, John, and Alan (2000) as a process which enables individuals or groups to fully access personal or collective power, authority, influence, and to employ that strength when engaging with other people, institutions or society. According to the authors, Empowerment programme is not just to empowered people because some people have already acquired the skills, while some have the wealth of knowledge and motivation, to do their jobs well. The authors are of the view that empowerment is letting this power out. Zimmerman (2000) defined empowerment programmes as those programmes that encourage people to gain the relevant skills and knowledge that will allow them to overcome obstacles in life or work environment and ultimately, help them develop within themselves or in the society. Blanchard et al. (2000) further suggested that to empower a youth "...sounds as though we are dismissing or ignoring males, but the truth are; both genders desperately need to be equally empowered." To them, this is because empowerment can only occurs through improvement of conditions, standards, events, and a global perspective of life (Blanchard et al., 1996).

Empowerment programmes are interventions that regularly involve young people as partners and participants in the decision-making processes that determine program goals, planning and/or implementation. With the support of caring adults, youth empowerment programs engage young people in program leadership as a characteristic of their involvement in safe, positive, and structured activities outside of formal education (Matthew & Paul, 2010). Common examples of youth

empowerment programs are found in youth organizations, skill acquisitions centres, community-based participatory research programs, social action and advocacy groups, peer education models, and informal and non-formal education programs that regularly integrate youth participation in program decision-making, as stated above (Matthew and Paul, 2010). Structurally, this participation within programs usually takes the form of advisory councils, committees, youth on boards, workgroups, or staff positions.

On the other hand, for any nations to achieve its empowerment programmes, such nation must adopt policy frameworks and a blueprint guiding the youths. For instance, there has been a growth in policies from World Programme of Action for Youth (2007), specifically discussing youth in developing and undeveloped countries. The policies offer a rich source of information on the situation facing youth and how the issue of youth can be strategically managed. The policy also provides a framework and practical guidelines for national action and international support to improve the situation of young people around the world. Suleiman (2006) defined empowerment as “the willingness and ability of an individual to seek for investment opportunities to establish and run an enterprise successfully”. Governments, donors and civil society organizations must be guided by a comprehensive national perspective in their efforts to address poverty and unemployment among young people. A network of major stakeholders must be established to ensure coordination of efforts across government departments, agencies and the donor community. Extensive consultations with young people and their representative associations are required at all stages of the policy development and implementation process (World Youth Report, 2005).

At present, the Development Data for Youth is a critical factor in policy making which has led to broad estimates of the numbers of poor youth (World Youth Report, 2005). For example, the current regional distributions of youth in poverty show that the largest number is found in South Asia, with 84.1 million, followed by sub-Saharan Africa with 60.7 million. The eight countries with the largest concentration of youth living in extreme poverty that is surviving on less than US \$1 a day is: India (67.7 million), China (33.3 million), Nigeria (18.60 million),

Bangladesh (9.9 million), Democratic Republic of Congo (6.9 million), Ethiopia (3.4 million), Indonesia (3.1 million) and Vietnam (2.9 million) (World Youth Report, 2005).

Beside these estimates, one important challenge associated with youth empowerment and development is obtaining an accurate reading of the scale of the problem and the underlying defining characteristics. To date, the development data on youth have been fragmented, and there has been very little systematic data collection carried out to assess the social and economic conditions of youth (Curtin, 2004). It is determining the level of participation that can create difficulties and challenges. Compare to numbers of youths who graduates from various tertiary institutions ready to enter the labour market every year. However, due to the slow economic growth, corruption, nepotism and much demand for experience by potential employers, 75% remain unemployed (Ashenden, Bodein, Cormack and Allsop, 2000). The authors reiterated that it is unfortunate that the government has been so myopic and insensitive on youth's empowerment programmes in terms of funding, provision of empowerment schemes, provision of infrastructural facilities and vocational centres among others including the fact that some government officials are characterized by corrupt practices, favouritism and nepotism.

Other important key youth policies which may be useful to this study include NORAD (2005), Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation Youth Policy (2007), UNFPA (2005), Commonwealth Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment (2007), Danida (2007), UNFPA Framework (2007), World Bank (2007) and World Development Report of 2007 (WYD, 2011).

RECOMMENDATION

- The youth should be incorporated in the system of governance to enable them take active part in matters that concern them.
- Governments, donors and civil society organizations must be guided by a comprehensive national perspective in their efforts to address poverty and unemployment among young people.
- A network of major stakeholders must be established to ensure coordination of efforts across government departments, agencies and the donor community.

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- Extensive consultations with young people and their representative associations are required at all stages of the policy development and implementation process.

CONCLUSION

It is now the time Nigeria government should desist from militarization and brutalizing of the masses though Nigerian army and the police forces in an attempt to curb social menace among the young people. These conventional methods employed in the past and in recent times in dealing with youths violence and conflict in Nigeria have no doubt failed to yield the desired results. This is not different from what obtains in all sections of Nigeria society in which River State is inclusive. In fact, the above mentioned parochial strategies have worsened the situation; insecurity and youth violence are still on the increase. Therefore an empowered youth have no time to engage in conflict and violence. When youths are empowered, they become veritable tools and formidable assets for national development but the reverse becomes the case when they are left to litter and roam about the streets of nation. Hence, empowerment as articulated and exhaustively discoursed in this study will salvage the nation from ship wrecking as a result of the activities emanating from violence. No society or organization can thrive in its developmental processes where violence is taking place, therefore the need to embrace youth empowerment as a requisite conflict management strategy for lasting solution for youth restiveness, conflict and violence and for mutual and peaceful coexistence among members of the society.

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