

Youth Restiveness in The Niger Delta: An Empirical Analysis of Unemployment, Education, And Economic Empowerment as Predictive Factors

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Abstract- *The study examines the relationship between youth restiveness, quality education, economic empowerment, development, and employment opportunities in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Data was collected through a cross-sectional survey of 305 second and third-year students in six federal universities representing the three sub-regions of the Niger Delta. Simple regression analysis was undertaken to test three hypotheses that established predictive relationships between independent variables and youth restiveness. The results indicated that all three variables were strongly correlated with economic empowerment/development having the strongest power of prediction ($R^2 = .296$), followed by employment ($R^2 = .256$), and good education with the lowest and most significant correlation ($R^2 = .037$). These findings have implications that comprehensive youth development initiative that integrates employment generation and educational reforms initiatives as well as economic empowerment programs are needed in reducing youth restiveness in the Niger Delta. They bear significant policy implications and conflict prevention initiatives in geographically marginal resource-rich areas.*

Keywords: *Education, Economic Empowerment, Niger Delta, Unemployment, Youth Restiveness*

I. INTRODUCTION

The current Nigerian society has been characterized by a new form of security challenge, which is exemplified by generation-after-generation violence and social disorders (Adesoji, 2011; Omede, 2011). The proliferation of criminal groups, insurgent groups, and militant groups has altered the socio-political landscape of the country as angry and disillusioned youths have become more militaristic in their articulation of state oppression and systematic marginalization (Ikelegbe, 2001; Albert, 2017). Broadly known as youth restiveness, this is one of the most powerful contemporary forces in Nigeria, threatening the country in terms of its national cohesion, economic growth, and social cohesiveness (Nwangwu, 2015).

The geographic scope of the protest led by youth corresponds to the national level of this crisis. Whether it is the Oodua People Congress (OPC) of Southwest Nigeria, the Tiv Youth Organization (TYO) of the North-central, the insurgency of Boko Haram devastating the Northeast, or the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) of the Southeast, youth movements have emerged in every one of the six geopolitical zones (Okoro, 2014; Onapajo & Uzodike, 2012). The Niger Delta has been the hotbed of militant action, especially by the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) and most recently the Niger Delta Avengers whilst the urban centers of Lagos, Calabar and cities in Edo and Ogun states struggle to contain waist-high levels of cultism and gang violence (Idemudia, 2009; Watts, 2007).

Government statistics, research, and media reports always indicate the youth are the highest segment involved in such security challenges (National Bureau of Statistics, 2020; Nigeria Security Tracker, 2021). This is even more concerning when it is realized that young people are the best human resource in the country; full of vitality, and creativity, and packed with growth potential valuable to national development (Curtain, 2000; Sommers, 2006). However, where such expectations are not met, and their socio-economic participation is restricted, such a demographic dividend is likely to become a security liability (Urdal, 2006; Beehner, 2007).

Structural inequality and system failure are the attendant reasons behind restiveness amongst the youths in Nigeria. Over 33 percent of mass unemployment in the country and over 40 percent of youth unemployment result in a state of economic desperation (National Bureau of Statistics, 2021). The lack of education, absence of health services, and inadequate accessibility to social facilities further the

predicament, whereas political exclusion and governance mishap deepens a sense of disempowerment (Omeje, 2006; Ukiwo, 2007). Furthermore, Oyadeyi's (2012) study argues that restiveness among the youths is rarely random but rather a planned response to continuous negligence and perceived isolation.

Previous study experience has described restiveness among young people as both a positive and negative response to social injustice (Elegbeleye, 2005; Ejumudo, 2010). Though sometimes erupting into protest, militancy, hostage-taking, and vandalism, these are usually fact-borne complaints of marginalization, unemployment, and denial of democratic dividends and not necessarily criminal propensities as such (Agbaje & Adejumobi, 2006). It is critical to be sensitive to the difference to be able to generate appropriate policy responses that would pluck at roots rather than leaves.

This paper analyses the predictive correlations amid employment chances, quality education, economic growth/empowerment, and youth restiveness in the Niger Delta area of Nigeria. It is based on known theoretical concepts such as Conflict Theory and Social Strain Theory that help to understand the socio-political and economic background of the youth unrest (Merton, 1938; Dahrendorf, 1959). With this empirical study, the findings will be aimed at giving evidence-based policy-making insights and conflict prevention methodologies.

II. CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

Youth Restiveness in the Niger Delta Context

The Niger Delta region offers an interesting case study on the analysis of youth restiveness because of its contradictory relationships between natural plenty and socio-economic poverty. The region is still marked by high poverty levels, environmental damages, and poor infrastructural growth even though it is in the production of oil, which brings in more than 80 percent of foreign exchange income to Nigeria (Idemudia, 2009; Obi, 2010). This resource curse phenomenon has provoked a situation that is favorable, especially to the radicalization of young people and militant operations.

Based on historical analysis, youth restlessness in the Niger Delta has assumed different stages over the years; the primitive environmental activism of the

1990s into the militarization of the grievances in the 2000s (Watts, 2007; Ojakorotu, 2009). The appearance of the movements like MEND and the Niger Delta Avengers indicates the radicalization of legitimate environmental and economic discontents into armed resistance movements where young people are the key recruits and operational tools (Asuni, 2009).

All our research studies indicated unemployment as a key trigger of youth restiveness in the region. In a study by Ekuerhare (2001), it was discovered that more than 70 percent of the youth in the Niger Delta region are either unemployed or underemployed which has prompted a state of economic desperation in which the various militant groups have been taking advantage of to recruit members. In the same vein, Okonta and Douglas (2003) reported how failure to acquire gainful employment drives young people to illegal oil bunkering business, kidnapping, and armed robbery.

Education and Youth Development

There is a huge literature relating education to youth behaviour in conflict situations. Harris (2008) opines that quality education is a form of a protective measure against youth participation in violence because it offers alternate channels of social mobility and civic republication. Nevertheless, in Nigeria, the case is different, as education systems have not been effective in equipping people with relevant economic activity skills, which has resulted in what Okojie (2003) calls, educated unemployment.

Niger Delta-specific studies have pointed to the mismatch between educational programs and the economic demands of the region (Tonwe & Eke, 2013). Universities turn out graduates in different fields but the absence of diversified economic activities and jobs outside the oil industry curtails job opportunities thus making graduates a source of frustration and possible restiveness (Ibeanu, 2008). Such educational interventions as peace education have become one of the most topical educational interventions to be used in conflict-prone areas. Davies (2004) shows how a curriculum that includes conflict resolution, tolerance, and civic responsibility can eliminate the tendency toward violence by young people. A number of activities have been tried in the context of the Niger Delta to incorporate the aspects of peace education into both formal and non-formal

education processes, yet the systematic assessment of their efficiency is quite scarce (Briggs, 2012).

Economic Empowerment and Conflict Prevention

The economic empowerment approaches have been acknowledged as indispensable parts of conflict prevention and post-conflict building strategies. In the argument by Stewart (2008), he states that horizontal inequalities or inequalities amongst identity groups are important to address to prevent the recurrence of conflict. Economic empowerment activities for youths in the Niger Delta region have involved microcredit programs, skills acquisition programs, and entrepreneurship development projects.

One thing leads to another One of the most inclusive efforts by the Nigerian government of youth economic empowerment in the Niger Delta region is the Presidential Amnesty Programme that came into force after the amnesty declaration of 2009 (Ojakorotu & Gilbert, 2010). Although it has succeeded in realizing short-term peace dividends, assessments indicate modest outcomes in terms of long-term sustainability and effects on youth restiveness (Davidheiser & Nyiayaana, 2011). According to the critics, the program only targeted ex-militants thereby leaving out the non-combatant youth, who could also be as vulnerable to radicalization (Obi, 2014).

Foreign experiences offer appropriate knowledge to be applied in the NigerDelta. The experience of post-conflict reconstruction in Sierra Leone, Liberia as well as in other West African states has proven the significance of multi-dimensional youth empowerment initiatives that integrate job creation, skills-building, and psychosocial support (Utas, 2012; Richards et al., 2005). These experiences indicate that lasting peace must address both urgent economic demands and the structural inequalities or marginalization of youth which are likely to persist.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Olurounbi (2021) observed that a third of the 69.7 million-strong labor force in Africa's most-populous nation either did nothing or worked for less than 20 hours a week, making them unemployed, according to the Nigerian definition. Another 15.9 million worked less than 40 hours a week, making them underemployed. Further, the

author noted that more than 60% of Nigeria's working-age population is younger than 34. Unemployment for people aged 15 to 24 stood at 53.4% in the fourth quarter and at 37.2% for people aged 25 to 34. The jobless rate for women was 35.2% compared with 31.8% for men.

In Nigeria, the unemployment rate measures the number of people actively looking for a job as a percentage of the labour force. Unemployment Rate in Nigeria increased to 33.30 percent in the fourth quarter of 2020 from 27.10 percent in the second quarter of 2020 and 42.5% in 2021 (National Bureau of Statistics (NBS)).

Aliogo (2021) noted in the 4th quarter report of 2020 by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) that put Nigeria's youth unemployment/underemployment at 42.5 per cent. Taken from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) data that put Nigeria's population at 211.4 million, it means the number of unemployed/underemployed youths in the country stands at 89,845,300.9. (90m). Omilana (The Guardian Newspaper of August 19, 2020) also noted that the unemployment data, recently published by Nigeria's statistics office, showed that unemployment in the region grew from 32% in the third quarter of 2018 to 37% in 2020.

Also, in a study of unemployment rate in Nigeria, Olurounbi (2021) reported that unemployment in Africa's largest economy surged to the second highest on a global list of countries monitored by Bloomberg. The jobless rate in Nigeria rose to 33.3% in the three months through December, according to a report published by National Bureau of Statistics on its website. That is up from 27.1% in the second quarter of 2020, the last period for which the agency released labor-force statistics.

According to Awojulugbe (in TheCableNewspaper of August 4, 2020) the executive director of Foundation for Partnership Initiative in the Niger Delta (PIND), Dara Akala, had observed that the lack of access to economic opportunities in the Niger Delta is a cause of unemployment which conversely is a driver of conflicts and youth restiveness. Akala also emphasized that the region records some of the highest rates of unemployment in the country. Thus in 2018, according to the National Bureau of Statistics, Akwa Ibom State reported the highest

unemployment rate (37.7%), followed by Rivers State with (36.4%), Bayelsa state (32.6%), Abia (31.6%). This was before the advent of COVID-19. Ironically, some of the states in the Niger Delta, especially Abia, Akwa Ibom, Delta, Imo, and Rivers, have some of the worst employment indices in Nigeria.

Affirming these observations, Nwokoma (2021) noted that the country's underemployment rate – people who work less than 20 hours a week – is also high at 22.8%. There has been a lot of uncertainty, largely due to policy inconsistencies, about where people should invest. This cuts across various economic sectors. One factor is the critically poor state of the economy. The economy has not been in good shape for the past five years and first went into a recession in 2016. The low level of infrastructure in the economy is another critical factor. For instance, farmers need to move their goods to markets. The routes that link the farms to the cities are in poor shape. Power supply is erratic and security is poor. These factors add up to a poor level of investment.

Omilana in the Guardian Newspaper of August 19, 2020, noted that the Niger Delta Congress (NDC) blamed the spike of unemployment rate in the Niger Delta region on the debilitating economic policies and laws of the country. The group in a statement said the policies continue to entrench underdevelopment to benefit a select few at the expense of an overwhelming majority. Thus analysis of the figures by the NDC shows that apart from Bayelsa State, the other five states in the region have an unemployment and underemployment rate of over 50% of the workforce. This means that over five million Niger Deltans have no jobs. Furthermore, the NDC indicted the Nigeria government when it observed that the region responsible for over 70% of its foreign exchange earnings, and over 90% of its budget expenditure, has the highest number of unemployed and underemployed youths.

Awojulugbe, (2020), observed with dismay that the Niger Delta has a history of unrest and militancy; attacking oil infrastructure and kidnapping employees of oil companies for ransom. This is generally attributed to the low level of employment of the youths of the region by both the government and multinational oil companies.

Speaking on the cases of unemployment and poverty in the Niger Delta region as a time bomb for the country, Bassey and Simon (2012) noted that one of the causes of poverty in the Niger Delta region today is the inability of many job seekers to secure gainful employment. It is an inescapable fact that more than 70% of the Nigeria populace is currently unemployed or underemployed. Those who are employed are earning starvation wages that cannot feed them, let alone meet their various needs. More alarming is the fact that the burden of this huge unemployment is borne by the youths and other energetic adults.

Education is the backbone of the society. Being the foundation stone of society, education brings progress, and paves way for innovations and reforms. Whatever progress our society has made over the centuries is thanks to education. Hence, the importance of quality education cannot be undermined in the society; it has brought innovations and inventions. In the 21st century, there are countries which are lagging behind in the race for quality education. The United Nations understands the supremacy of education for a brighter and prosperous future and is therefore of the consensus that quality education and not merely education should be a reality for all. In its Sustainable Development Goals, the UN has identified quality education as a major goal to ensure the 'transformation of the world' by 2030. By quality education, the UN implies equitable and standard education for all that will promote lifelong learning and the urge to gather knowledge. Inclusivity and equitability are the foundations to be upheld in quality education and not a greater literacy rate. This is a revolutionary approach to understanding education and making it the means of changing the world (United Nations Development Programme, 2021).

However, quality education, which is essential to real learning and human development, is influenced by factors both inside and outside the classroom, from the availability of proper supplies to the nature of a child's home environment. Improvements in the quality of teaching can reduce dropout rates and ensure better retention and transitions from early childhood learning into primary and secondary education (United Nations Development Programme, 2021).

Currently in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, it would not be out of place to say that millions of children who have completed primary education have not mastered the foundational skills of basic numeracy and literacy due to the poor quality of education. Consequently, Yetunde (2019) reported that according to the findings fully supported by Pro-Papers, an education writing firm in USA, the education sector should be paid lots of attention because it gives room for the country's development. Unfortunately, the quality and standard of education in Nigeria is poor because it has not been paid adequate attention.

Education in Nigeria is divided into primary, secondary, and tertiary, and each Nigerian child is meant to spend 16 years combined going through the country's education system. Yet one in five out-of-school children globally is in Nigeria, making up about 20% of children that are not getting any kind of formal education globally. According to the author, this situation exists because Nigeria's education sector is plagued with quite a few issues that need to be fixed to ensure that every child has access to quality education in line with the UN's Global Goal for quality education (Okunola, 2020).

Ezedikachi (2020) explained that economic development represents the per capita increase in the production of a country. Corroborating the views of Winston (2013) and Amartya (1999), the author explained that economic development compares the excess of consumption and production of a country with increase in population. This increase, for him, is a result of a better combination and increase in the productivity of the factors of production. Further, the author averred that economic development/empowerment concerns the creation of freedom for people and removing of obstacles to greater freedom. Greater freedom, as it were, enables people to choose their own destiny. Economic development/empowerment necessarily implies changes in different aspects of human life, including changes in resource supplies, in the rate of capital formation, in the size and composition of the population, in technology, skills and efficiency, in institutional and organizational set-up. These changes constitute the wider objectives of ensuring more equitable income distribution, greater employment and poverty alleviation.

Economic development/empowerment usually takes three forms. They are:

- Business Retention and Expansion – enhancing existing businesses
- Business Attraction – attracting new business
- Business Creation – encouraging the growth of new businesses

All three forms of economic development/empowerment aim to create new primary jobs that pay more than the prevailing wage, increase the amount of income coming into the community from outside its market area, and create greater capital investment in the community. The strategy is to achieve this in a number of diversified industries (Anwana & Affia, 2018).

IV. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical construct of the analysis of youth restiveness is drawn on a combination of sociological and psychological theories. By far the best theory that can be put forward to explain the occurrence of youth unrest in the rich natural resource region like the Niger Delta is Relative Deprivation Theory which was first formulated by Stouffer et al. (1949) and later advanced by Gurr (1970). This theory further holds that human beings will always be restive whenever they sense gaps between what they yearn to see and what they live to see (Runciman, 1966). Niger Delta is characterized by a lot of poverty amidst many natural resources; this aspect coupled with other factors makes the environment relatively conducive to relative deprivation among the youth.

Another elaboration of how social pressures result in deviant behaviour is the Social Strain Theory which was formulated by Merton (1938). The inability of legitimate channels to achieve culturally prescriptive goals leads people to illegitimate channels, which are mainly illegitimate (Agnew, 2005). Lack of job opportunities and poor education in the Niger Delta offers structural attractions that are bound to drive the youth into volatile behavior in search of alternative means of achieving social and economic goals.

Moreover, it can be noted that Conflict Theory according to Dahrendorf (1959) and Collins (1975) emphasizes the competition of resources and power difference causing social conflict. The situation in Niger Delta where the oil wealth is held by economic and political elites leaving the host communities in

poverty offers a battleground to continuous conflict between the privileged and underprivileged groups of people of which youth are the prime resisters.

V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study relied on a cross-sectional survey design to analyze the relationships amid employment, quality education, economic development/empowerment, and youth restiveness in Niger Delta. The quantitative approach assisted in statistical hypothesis testing and extrapolation of results to the study population (Creswell, 2014).

Population and Sample

The target population was the second and third-year undergraduates in federal universities in Niger Delta region. This age bracket was targeted because of their level of development, exposure to education, and probability of having shaped views regarding the socio-economic situations in the region. The targeting of federal universities guaranteed access to geographically and socio-economically diversified students in the region. To ensure representation and statistical significance, the sampling was carried out in three sub-regions of the Niger Delta:

- Western Niger Delta: Delta and Ondo States
- Central Niger Delta: Abia and Rivers States
- Eastern Niger Delta: Cross River and Akwa Ibom States

The study selected from each sub-region two federal universities to make a total of six institutions that partook in the study. Such stratification provided good geographical dispersal and augmented the Representative of findings.

Sampling Technique

This study employed the stratified random sampling method to give a proportional representation in the three sub-regions. The sample size of 305 students which is about 10 percent of the estimated population in the sampled states was used, and it is more than the minimum needed in statistical testing and making generalizations (Cohen, 1988). In the individual universities, participants were identified through simple random sampling amongst the eligible students, that is, every participant had an equal chance of being selected and selection bias was reduced.

Instrumentation

A structured questionnaire specifically designed for this study was used in the collection of data. The instrument had validated scales and items as used in some past studies on youth restiveness, employment satisfaction, educational quality assessment, and economic empowerment evaluation. The questionnaire had five major sections:

- A. Demographic information
- B. Employment-related variables
- C. Quality education assessment
- D. Economic development/empowerment indicators
- E. Youth restiveness measures

The instrument reliability and validity were pilot-tested using a sample of 30 students who attended universities that were not part of the actual study. The internal consistency was acceptable as measured by Cronbach alpha coefficients that were greater than 70 in all scales (Nunnally, 1978).

Data Collection Procedure

The data collection exercise took a total of six weeks through research assistants who had been trained and understood the regional context. Relative institutional review boards provided ethical approval, and all participants gave informed consent. The fact that participation was voluntary was stressed and confidentiality was promised to facilitate truthful answers.

Data Analysis

SPSS version 28.0 was applied to conduct statistical analysis. Descriptive statistics were calculated to describe the sample and study variables. Each hypothesis was tested using simple regression analysis, which evaluates predictive relationships between independent variables (employment, quality education, economic development/empowerment) and the dependent variable (youth restiveness). Simple regression was a suitable option since the research was not characterized by multiple predictive relationships but instead involved individual relationships. Each of the hypotheses was significant at the .05 level by the traditional standards of social science research. The interpretation of effect sizes followed the guidelines of Cohen (1988) where R^2 values of .01, .09 and .25 denoted small, medium, and large effects, respectively.

Presentation of Results and Analysis

Sample Characteristics

The final sample consisted of 305 undergraduate students, with approximately equal representation across the three Niger Delta sub-regions. The gender

distribution was 52.1% male and 47.9% female, reflecting the general university population composition in the region. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 26 years ($M = 21.3$, $SD = 1.8$), with 58.4% in their second year and 41.6% in their third year of study.

VI. HYPOTHESIS TESTING

Hypothesis One

Null Hypothesis: There is no significant relationship between employment and youth restiveness.

Result:

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error
1	.509	.259	.256	6.30595

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p-value
Regression	4206.250	1	4206.250	105.778	.000*
Residual	12048.779	303	39.765		
Total	16255.030	304			

Variables	B	Beta	t	p-value
(Constant)	5.868		5.024	.000
Employment	.847	.509	10.285	.000

*Significant at $p < .05$

Interpretation:

The adjusted R² (.256) shows that employment accounts for a 25.6 percent variance in restiveness among the youth. The F-value of 105.778 ($p < .000$) affirms that employment status is a notable determinant of restiveness amongst the youth in the Niger Delta. The hypothesis tested was how employment opportunities correlate to the restiveness among the youth. The simple regression analysis created significant positive relationship results ($R = .509$, $R^2 = .259$, Adjusted $R^2 = .256$, $F(1,303) = 105.778$, $p < .001$).

The adjusted R² shows that employment explains 25.6 percent of the variance in youth restiveness which is a large effect size based on the criteria of Cohen (1988). The regression equation: Youth Restiveness = 5.868 + .847(Employment) in which the coefficient of employment was statistically significant ($= .509$, $t = 10.285$, $p < .001$). This positive correlation implies that when the number of employment opportunities is reduced, youth restiveness rises, which confirms theoretical expectations and earlier empirical evidence.

Hypothesis Two

Null Hypothesis: There is no significant relationship between quality education and youth restiveness.

Result:

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error
1	.202	.041	.037	7.17409

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p-value
Regression	660.368	1	660.368	12.831	.000*
Residual	15594.661	303	51.468		
Total	16255.030	304			

Variables	B	Beta	T	p-value
(Constant)	9.041		3.864	.000
Quality Education	.458	.202	3.582	.000

*Significant at $p < .05$

Interpretation:

The adjusted R² (.037) shows that quality education explains a very small portion (3.7) of the variance in the restiveness of the youth. Nevertheless, it is a significant predictor with the F- value of 12.831 (p <.000). This discovery examined the correlation between quality education and restiveness among the youths. The unadjusted relationship was significant but attenuated (R =.202, R² =.041, Adjusted R² =.037, F(1,303) = 12.831, p <.001) by simple regression analysis. The effect size of quality

education on restiveness in the youth is small (3.7 percent variance).

The regression equation had the following form:

Youth Restiveness = 9.041 +.458(Quality Education) where the coefficient of education was found to be significant (=202, t = 3.582, p <.001). Although the effect size is statistically significant, it is small which implies that quality education in isolation cannot do much in alleviating youth restiveness in the Niger Delta context.

Hypothesis Three

Null Hypothesis: There is no significant relationship between economic development/empowerment and youth restiveness.

Result:

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error
1	.546	.298	.296	6.13742

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p-value
Regression	4841.653	1	4841.653	128.535	.000*
Residual	11413.376	303	37.668		
Total	16255.030	304			

Variables	B	Beta	T	p-value
(Constant)	5.121		4.534	.000
Economic Development/Empowerment	.897	.546	11.337	.000

*Significant at p <.05

Interpretation:

Economic development/empowerment explains 29.6% of the variation in restiveness among the youth at an adjusted R² of.296. It is a very strong and significant predictor as indicated by the F-value of 128.535 and p <.000. Lastly, this hypothesis examined the youth restiveness interaction with economic development/empowerment. The interaction of the three variables was highest with Outcomes (R =.546, R² =.298, Adjusted R² =.296, F (1,303) = 128.535, p <.001).

The economic development/empowerment explains a large effect size (29.6% variance) of the youth restiveness. The coefficient of the regression equation was very significant (=546, t = 11.337, p <.001) and the equation was: Youth Restiveness = 5.121 +.897(Economic Development/Empowerment). This finding restates the urgent need for economic empowerment in the determination of youth restiveness in the Niger Delta sub-region.

VII. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The results of the study present a valuable piece of information on factors that cause restiveness among the youth in the Niger Delta region. The multiple correlates of the three predictor variables confirmed the multidimensional concept of youth restiveness besides indicating the comparative significance of various intervention measures. The significant association between employment and youth restiveness (R² =.256) not only agrees with theoretical expectations but also conforms to the vast literature that has identified unemployment as a major cause of youth unrest (Urdal, 2006; Collier & Hoeffler, 2004). This is especially important in the case of Niger Delta where the dominance of the oil industry has resulted in a shallow economic base with few employment opportunities to absorb the increasing number of youths. The coefficient is positive implying that, with better employment prospects, youth restiveness decreases and thus job creation programs may be effective conflict prevention tools.

These findings rely on the relative deprivation theory by Gurr (1970) because the young people in Niger Delta feel frustrated when they contrast their financial situations with the oil riches of the region. The absence of any substantial job prospects, even in combination with the existence of highly valued natural resources, results in a situation that facilitates militant recruitment and anti-state operations. Policy implications, there should be diversified economic development policies that would generate jobs in sectors of the economy other than the oil sector, such as agriculture, manufacturing, and services. Consequently, correlation between quality education and youth restiveness ($R^2 = .037$) has a more complicated image. Although education is generally a channel to social mobility and non-violent resolution of conflicts, the trivial effect size indicates that the quality of education per se is not enough to resolve the youth restiveness in the Niger Delta. This observation could be attributed to a lack of connection between the education content and the economic demands of the region leading to what Okojie (2003) has branded as educated unemployment.

This modest effect may be due to a number of reasons. The quality of education in most institutions can be poor in a way that would not help in effective civic participation or in readiness to work. Second, in case quality education is offered, a lack of matching jobs could result in the growth of frustration among the educated youth. Third, the education systems might not include pertinent elements of peace education, which explicitly deal with dynamics of conflict and alternatives to resolve disputes.

The greatest correlation was recorded between economic development/empowerment and youth restiveness ($R^2 = .296$), a fact that has been argued to assert that holistic economic interventions are necessary for dealing with youth restiveness. Economic empowerment has a wider aspect/scope than employment per se and its broader aspects involve access to credit, entrepreneurship, skills training, and/or involvement in economic decision-making processes. The high effect size indicates that empowerment programs that concentrate on various aspects of economic participation might work better compared to those that focus on one aspect. Hence, this result can be explained by the horizontal inequality model presented by Stewart (2008), according to which group-based economic inequality

should be a key factor contributing to conflict prevention. Economic empowerment programs involving real opportunities for economic involvement and ownership by the youth in the Niger Delta could help resolve the underlying grievances better than cosmetic interventions.

Comparative Analysis

The comparison of the three predictor variables brings out valuable information in setting policy priorities. Economic development/empowerment exhibits the best predictive power followed by employment whereas quality education has the least relationship. This hierarchy implies that factors related to the economy impact more on youth restiveness immediately as compared to factors related to education. Yet, these associations are to be viewed in terms of complementarity (and not competition). Although quality education might not have a direct bearing on restiveness, it can become a pillar of successful employment and economic empowerment. In like manner, the viability of jobs might be best when underpinned by pertinent educational training and economic strength programs in general.

Theoretical Implications

The results confirm major expectations of the relative deprivation theory, which shows how economic inequality fuels restiveness among the youths in resourceful states. The swift associations found on economic variables (employment and empowerment) affirm that material deprivation is an important element to consistent structural violence prevention, whereas the attenuated education relationship indicates that symbolic or cultural variables could be less pertinent in the association.

Social strain theory also finds support in that the findings reveal that the blocked legitimate channels of economic mobility are a factor that leads to restiveness among the youth. The more strongly established relations to employment and empowerment than education indicate that structural constraints to economic participation matter more than educational constraints to motivate restive behaviour.

Limitations

There are a couple of limitations to be noted when interpreting these findings. Firstly, causal inferences are restricted by the cross-sectional design since it is

impossible to determine the direction of the relationships among variables. To offer better causal evidence, longitudinal studies should be done to establish the links between economic factors and restiveness among the youth.

Second, the research team concentrated on university students, who do not necessarily reflect the youth population most at risk of restiveness. Subsequent studies ought to consider out-of-school youth as well as those with low education prospects to increase the external validity of results.

Third, the use of self-reported measures can lead to social desirability bias, especially when it comes to the sensitive issues of restiveness and militant sympathies. Mixed-methods design with qualitative data and behavioral observations may help to give more complete insights into these phenomena.

Fourth, the simple regression method though suitable when there is the need to test the one-by-one relationship, fails to provide the complex interactions among predictor variables. Multivariate analyses may provide the interactions among employment, education, and empowerment on the restiveness among the youth.

VIII. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper gives empirical support to the correlations between employment, quality education, economic development/empowerment, and youth restiveness in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. The results indicate that the three factors are significant predictors of youth restiveness, although economic development/empowerment and employment related better to youth restiveness than quality education. These findings bear significant consequences with regard to policy-making and conflict prevention mechanisms in the region. The overwhelming role of economic variables in determining the restiveness among the youths' points to the need to focus on material deprivation and structural inequalities as the major intervention measures. Although education is relevant in long-term development, the short-term effect of job creation and economic empowerment activities may have more substance in quelling youth restiveness in the short run.

Therefore, the following recommendations are suggested for the study;

1. Policy suggestions:
 - Elaborate detailed employment generation schemes that offer young people employment in various sectors of the economy;
 - Establish comprehensive economic empowerment projects to give the youth access to credit, entrepreneurship training and business development services;
 - Redesign education curricula to make them relevant to the needs of the economy and the job market;
 - Incorporate peace education aspects into both formal and non-formal education programs;
 - Establish clear and fair systems of distribution of oil revenues to fund youth-related development projects.

Areas for further research

Prospective studies need to be done using longitudinal designs to determine cause and effect relationships, they should involve a wider scope of youths, not just university students and they should use multivariate analyses to determine interactions among predictor variables. Further, comparative research between various parts of Nigeria may offer some insight into the external validity of such results and the design of location-specific intervention techniques. The research will add to the emerging literature about the youth and conflict in sub-Saharan Africa and confer practical value to the solution of one of the most nagging security problems facing Nigeria. The facts above ensure the demands of holistic, economically-oriented youth development strategies as part and parcel of the sustainable peace and development policies in the Niger Delta and other resource-prosperous areas witnessing youth-led conflicts.

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