



SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND YOUTH RESTIVENESS IN THE NIGER DELTA REGION SOUTH-SOUTH, NIGERIA

Nlemchukwu Emmanuel, KENNETH ADINDE PhD, PROFESSOR ELEAGU GREENE IFEANYICHUKWU, ANUKA ANTHONY O and CHIKE G. ONYEACHO ESQ,

Abstract: *The spate at which youths consume hard drugs in Niger Delta Region, South-South Nigeria has assumed an alarming proportion. Such antisocial behaviour seems to have culminated into violence; particularly youth restiveness in the from government region, extending to criminal behaviours like kidnapping, armed robbery, gang-raping, militancy, electoral violence among other social vices. Youths' restiveness has become opium with which the Niger Delta Youths make agitation and secure their demands. Scholars have linked youths' restiveness to insecurity and religious intolerance. However, none or few of these studies have investigated hard drug consumption as a causative factor to youth restiveness in the region. This is the gap that this study was poised to address. The study was cross sectional. The sample size was 180 youths purposively selected across three states in Niger Delta region. The instrument for data collection was questionnaire. Frequency and percentage were used for analysis. The chi-square test of relationship was adopted for the study. The study found that youth restiveness is not caused by consumption of hard drugs rather the deprivation meted on the youths., The study recommended among others that government should design and develop programmes and policies aimed alleviating youths' poverty in Niger Delta region.*

Key words: Drugs, Niger Delta, Restiveness, Violence, Youths

Introduction

Youths of any society constitute a very strong force in economic, social and overall wellbeing of members of the society. Thus, without the youths, hunger and poor human relation, lawlessness and anarchy will occupy the entire system. Youth is conceived as a period of transformation from reliance on childhood to adulthood's freedom and being aware of the need to work with other members of the society to help achieve the aim and objectives of society (United Nation Youth 2019 cited in Akpokighe & Ejovi, 2020)

Youth restiveness is conceived as a situation where the youths are unable to be still or quiet and pose challenge to control emanating from unsatisfied condition. Youth restiveness is the aftermath of deprivation, neglect, marginalization and feeling of dissatisfaction (Ejumudo,

2014). Youth restiveness creates a condition whereby youths are unable to solve the societal needs. Elegbeleye (2005) affirmed that one of the crucial factors that could lead youths' restiveness include perceived victimization arising from economic exploitation. Nsidibe, Emaimo & Ameh (2017) stressed that restiveness undertaken by youths have been on increase in almost all communities in Nigeria, particularly on the assumption of the so-called Nigeria democracy. The authors stressed that there have been proliferation of unraveled violence, killing of innocent people and currently, the insurgency in North-East, Nigeria, militancy in the Niger Delta and wanton attack of Fulani's herdsmen.

On the other hand, substance abuse refers to the use of certain chemical for the purpose of creating pleasurable effects on the brain (Mandel, 2021). The author noted that



there are over 190 million drug users around the globe and the problem has been on the increase especially among the young adults under the age of thirty years. Drugs that are abused can be classified into three strands. These include depressants; the drugs cause depression of the brain's faculties. Drugs under this group include sleeping pills (barbiturates and heroin). The second is stimulants. These drugs cause stimulation of the brain, giving rise to alertness and increased bursts of activity. A rapid heart rate, dilated pupils, raised blood pressure, nausea or vomiting and behavioural changes such as agitation and impaired judgment may also result. The third is hallucinogens which causes hallucinations and 'out of this world' syndrome, feeling of disassociation from oneself. Hallucination may cause distorted sensory perception (Mandal, 2021). Substance abuse refers to a pattern of harmful use of any substance for mood-altering purpose. It is the use of illegal drugs such as cocaine, heroin and methamphetamine (Buddy, 2022).

Elegbeleye (2005) cited in Anasi (2010) noted that youth restiveness is a sustained protestation embarked upon to enforce desired outcome from a constituted authority by an organized body of youths. It is often marked by violence and disruption of lawful activities. The author identified three major factors that trigger youth restiveness to include the peer motivated excitement of being a student, the jingoistic pursuit of patriotic ideas and perceived victimization emanating from economic exploitation. Although youth restiveness has been a consistent occurrence in six geopolitical zones in Nigeria, the youth restiveness in Niger Delta region seems to be an intractable phenomenon. The people of Niger Delta were predominantly fishermen and subsistence agriculturalists. Indeed, prior the discovery of oil in commercial quantity people of Niger Delta relied upon the provision of nature for their livelihood. However, a shift from coal to crude oil as the major source of revenue for the Nigeria federation and indeed the imposition of the environment with oil exploration shifted the original 'nature' provided economy to a mechanized and alien economy which not only left the

youth unemployed but equally challenged the aquatic life which not only served as source of livelihood but also recreation for the people. This precarious condition of the youths seems to have been the cause of drug abuse in the region. The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA, 2011) in its review of 2010 activity in Nigeria pointed out that 6788 suspects were arrested at the airports and other exit parts of the country. The majority of the perpetrators were youths. The focus of this research is to identify and substantiate the underlying thrills of substance abuse by Niger Delta youths and their relentless restiveness which has, on many notable occasions attempted to cripple/stagnate socio-cultural and economic activities in the area.

Statement of the Problem

Inyang (2018) noted that restiveness is part of life. It could be seen in someone who has excess energy, zeal and drive to do things. From childhood to adulthood, restiveness is a common feature because man is born to make ends meet and thus cannot be docile or inactive. Youth restiveness has continued to present itself in Niger Delta region of South-South Nigeria in spite the seeming government effort to curb the trend. Niger Delta region has witnessed wanton destruction of infrastructure resulting from violent struggle for better living conditions by the youths in the area. Despite the shift to civilian rule, political violence and youth restiveness has remained prevalent. There have been escalations of the proliferation of small and medium arms and a large population of unemployed youths who are conscripted or dramatically forced into politics as thugs. These youths are often hired by cruel politicians to affect various forms violence like kidnapping of political opponents or expatriates The Niger Delta region for many years now since the history of Nigeria has become the centre of every form of violent exhibition. Irikana (2007) stressed that the incessant and riotous dimension of youth restiveness in the region is clearly the consequence of long period of neglect by the Federal Government of Nigeria. The irony of it all is that Niger Delta is the economic hub of the country, providing the material (oil) with which the



Federal Government of Nigeria uses in developing other areas, leaving the host area completely underdeveloped and debased. The youths who are at their prime in life have no employment. The aquatic life which hitherto provided jobs for the teeming youths have been hijacked through oil exploration. As Wokocha (2007) maintained that unemployment which is a situation in which people are willing and capable of working are unable to find job at the prevailing wages has become a big problem for the Nigeria youths. The author stressed that unemployment is high in Niger Delta as oil companies do not hire most of their employees from the region that produce the oil, but rather from the non-oil producing areas

Restiveness among youths globally and those in Nigeria has become a behavior pattern which has degenerated into a topical global issue. Youth restiveness portrays man's negative side of social development. The negative development is rather unfortunate and has become one of the many security challenges facing man in contemporary society. In many occasions, lives and properties worth millions of naira have been lost or vandalized and some razed down by restive youths. The seeming unabated youth restiveness tends to be in concomitance with the abysmal abuse of drugs by Niger Delta youths. Indeed, several studies have been carried out on the health implication of drug abuse, youths' restiveness and insecurity, religion as a cause of youths' restiveness (Mohammed, 2013, Oromareghake, 2010). However, very few or none of these studies have dealt with drug as a causative factor to youth restiveness. This is the gap that informed this present study which aimed at investigating the influence of drug abuse on youth restiveness

Objective of the Study

The objective of the study was to investigate the influence of substance abuse on youths' restiveness in Niger Delta Region, South-South, Nigeria

Review of Literature

Abuse of drugs in Nigeria is caused by many social factors and economic factors. Among the social factors that propels the abuse of drugs include decline of family value

system, parents not playing their roles properly, children and youths therefore not receiving proper guidance, peer pressure, social media influence, poverty and unemployment (Adeyeye, 2022). The Niger Delta people are feeling deprived and when a group experiences relative deprivation simultaneously, the potential for spontaneous outbreak of crisis, directed at rival groups intensifies (Richardson, 1996 in Iyang, 2018). Discussing the emergence of youth restiveness in Niger Delta, Onduca (2001) cited in Inyang (2018) chronicled that in the early days of Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND), any act of kidnapping or related violence was aimed at drawing the attention to environmental degradation and injustice in the zone. Restiveness including militancy, kidnapping and other unacceptable youth behaviour focused on three main issues (a) the quest for the abrogation of laws relating to oil exploration and empowerment of the people to have absolute control over the resources (b) the issue of resource control and self determination be recognized and put to use. As cardinal principles for the protection of their minority status (c) that appropriate institutional and financial arrangement be put in place for the development as well as the numerous environmental problems associated with oil exploration and exploitation in oil producing communities in Niger Delta. The refusal by government to adhere to these propositions triggered youth restiveness in the region. Alabi (2014) noted that the injustice meted on the people of Niger Delta has produced an antithesis of violence and restiveness. The incidence has coincided with massive killings, protests, hostages and other economic induced violence. The author further noted that it has been in the front burner of political discuss in Nigeria to have a true federalism, but the realization of this move has always been watered down consistently by centrifugal forces which no doubt spell doom for the continued cooperative existence of the country, Nigeria.

The precarious condition of the people of Niger Delta, particularly the youths have degenerated to a seeming uncontrollable consumption of illicit and hard drugs.



Discussing the alarming rate of drug or substance abuse in Niger Delta, the Interim Administrator, and Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP) raised an alarm over an emerging wave of militancy in Niger Delta and this restiveness is being fuelled by massive substance abuse in the region. He identified poverty as the central cause of drug abuse in Nigeria, the NDLEA boss explained that criminals use drugs to embolden themselves before embarking on criminal activity. According to the report by the United Nations Office on Drug and Crime (UNODC), nearly 25 million youths are affected globally with Africa being the second largest continent with 28 million youths who are drug abusers. The report further revealed that amongst 30 countries, Nigeria is rated number three as one of the most Marijuana smoking countries in the world with 14.3 percent in Africa. The boss added that Delta, Bayelsa, Rivers among other states in Nigeria have topped the list on drug abuse among youths (Onyenucheya, 2017). The report further stated that Nigeria has the highest number of drug convicts in the world with report from Amnesty International revealing Nigeria to have the second highest number of death sentences with 527 in the world behind China.

In a study by Oromaregbake and other scholars, (2013) in which the researchers scholarly explored the various aspects of youth involvement in restiveness and other forms of violence as well as the impact of it on the economy, the future of the Niger Delta and the Nigeria society in general, Youth restiveness and insecurity in Niger Delta: A focus in Delta state by The sociological implications of drug abuse among Nigeria youths:-who is to blame- an unpublished article written by an astute Nigeria graduate student activist in which he highlighted the impact of drugs on Nigerian youth towards eroding our moral values, socio-economic aspirations and political continuity, unity of purpose in development, growth and change. In another study carried out by Chikezie & Ebuenyi (2018) in rural teaching hospital in Niger Delta, it was found that tramadol; an opioid agent used for pain management was misused. The report has it that the misuse

of the tramadol drug was associated with increased morbidity and mortality and common among young adults in low income setting. The majority of the cases were males. The report equally has it that the drug was used for non-medical reason. The patient examined presented with various clinical features including altered level of consciousness.

Theoretical Framework

Edwin Sutherland's theory of differential association (1947) marked the watershed in the sub-cultural studies of delinquent/criminal behavior. It diverted attention from biogenic and psychogenic causes of crime to a closer, systematic examination of social and environmental influence, (Nweke, 2006). From the time of Sutherland's study, scholars no longer focused on concepts such as social pathology, genetic inheritance, biological characteristics and personality flaws as factors that determined the process by which normal individuals acted in a criminal way, (Gibbons 1975, Reid 2000:153). To him, criminal patterns of life styles are not individualistic. They do not pertain to the individual alone. They are based on collective delinquent and criminal experiences which form subcultures of the criminal gangs. Also, he contended that criminal behaviors are reflections of an individual's or group's needs and values. An individual or group of individuals may use criminal ways to obtain those things that are of value and which meet their desired needs, just as other individuals may use legitimate means to acquire things of value which are also desirable to them. Crime is a political constraint of society. Like other forms of human conduct, criminal activity, Sutherland claimed, is acquired in a process of social interaction. Thus, the social influences people encounter in a social setting are inharmonious and inconsistent, therefore, some people become involved in contacts with those who adhere to criminal norms and become criminals as a consequence while others may not have such contacts. The theory posits that exposure to criminal tendencies motivates a person to learn criminal traits such as robbery, burglary, kidnapping, vandalism, drug addiction etc, depending on the process of



communication pattern, frequency, duration, priority and intensity of the learning, (Iwarimie-Jaja, 2003:144-146).

The spate of hard drug consumption by youths in Niger Delta paints no irony that it has become part of their social life. Youths have continued to use the consumption of hard drugs to demonstrate a show of wit in the region. It is expedient to remark that most of the time, such antisocial behaviour degenerates to formation of gangs whose stock in trade is to perpetuate violence.

Method

The researcher adopted cross sectional survey design. Ezeah (2004) affirmed that cross sectional survey design takes a photographic situation report of an event or phenomenon. For him, such survey is appropriate when one is on opinion, belief systems, knowledge values and demographic characteristics of people. The study under reference is by no means an exception as it investigated the influence of drug abuse on youth restiveness in Niger Delta, South-South, Nigeria.

The population for the study is the entire youths of Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers state. However, due to the exhaustive population size of the youths of the selected states, a total number of 180 respondents between the ages of 18 and 40 years will be randomly selected. The reason for using 180 persons is to make the research less cumbersome for the researcher. Also, most people find it hard to express their opinions and ideas to others especially when it has to do with issues or studies of this sensitive nature where the researcher tries to elicit information about their habits, personal life style and experiences. So, to be minimal in selection of the population will enhance accuracy and validity in the research results.

The stratified random sampling technique was adopted.. This is a probability sampling technique that tends to give every member of the population an equal opportunity of being selected as a sample for a study. This is made possible through the process of randomization. Randomization is the process of selecting an individual without bias or any special preferences. This is true because studies or findings based on probability sampling

are valid and more reliable, and moreover, the findings could be generalized in the entire population. The entire population into subgroups or strata, for example, the population could be divided into boys and girls, urban and rural, rich and poor, employed and unemployed, young and old etc. The procedure involves first the identification of the population and then sharing the population into the different strata. From each stratum, random sampling is used to select the required sample which will maintain a representative dimension within each category.

The “closed ended” questionnaire was adopted which gives the respondents limited options or choices to choose from towards eliciting their opinions about substance abuse and restiveness in the region. The questionnaire was holistic enough in providing questions that are relevant to the subject matter of this research work. The researcher also employed secondary sources of data collection besides the primary sources identified above. Such secondary sources include relevant library materials as well as browsing the internet all targeted at gathering reasonable information for the study. The technique for data collection involves the primary data collection which is the use of questionnaires. The questionnaire method is presently assumed to be the most reliable method of data collection because it allows the respondent to freely choose his responses from several options without fear of intimidation, shame and other negative feelings attached to it. Respondent's firmness of decision/choice is more or less guaranteed or assured by the use of questionnaires. 180 questionnaires will be distributed to the three selected states of Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers States with 60 questionnaires for each state making it a total of 180 questionnaires. The justification for this minimal selection of study population is to enable the researcher successfully collect the entire distributed questionnaire. Most people especially the acclaimed social misfits like Indian hemp smokers, drunkards, militants etc may be reluctant to divulge information on sensitive matters. Secondly, since the researcher resides in Rivers state, it will be financially fairer for him to administer questionnaire to the selected



study population. Other sources of information include Library and internet sources (bibliographic source). In this study, three types of data analysis techniques will be combined to interpret the data. The first is the simple percentage method which will be used to analyze the research questions. Secondly, we will apply descriptive statistics such as bar charts and trend analysis for the socio-demographic data, and finally, the chi-square (X^2) statistical tool will be employed to test the hypotheses formulated in the study.

The validity of the instrument was ascertained through the simple conventional means of discussion and consultation with the project supervisor and other experts in the field of

criminology, youth development, policy makers, conflict resolution and development studies.

The researcher adopted test-retest method to determine the reliability of the questionnaire. The researcher administered 20 questionnaires to 20 students outside the area of the study. Two weeks later, the same instrument was re-administered to the same set of students. Using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient to calculate for the two sets of data, the result was 0.79 showing positive correlation and that the instrument was reliable enough for the study.

Testing the Hypothesis

Table 1: Contingency Table for the Hypothesis

LOCATION	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
RIVERS	10	21	19	2
BAYELSA	14	28	13	9
DELTA	18	33	10	3
TOTAL	42	82	42	14

Source: Field work, 2019

H_{01} : There is a significant relationship between substance abuse and youth restiveness in Niger Delta region of Nigeria.

Table 2 : Table of chi-square Test of significance

		Observed	Expected
Chi-Square		.833 ^a	3.000 ^c
Df		10	5
Asymp. Sig.		1.000	.700
Monte Carlo Sig.	Sig.	1.000 ^b	.778 ^b
	95% Confidence Interval		
	Lower Bound	.983	.717
	Upper Bound	1.000	.839

In this case, the p -value (0.07) is higher than the standard alpha value (0.05), so do not reject the null hypothesis that asserts the two variables are independent of each other. To put it simply, the result is *not significant* –

Findings and Discussion

Since calculated chi-square at 5.1 is less than the critical value at 12.592, it implies that there is no significant relationship between substance abuse and youth

restiveness in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. The response to question 4 of the questionnaire was used to test this hypothesis. From the various responses from the three selected states combined, 42 strongly agreed, 82 respondents agreed, 42 disagreed while 14 respondents strongly disagreed making it a total of 180 respondents. The result of the chi-square test agreed with the null hypothesis. The theory of grievance according to Ogbeifun



(2007) which firmly discredited hold on substance abuse supports this finding. To him, youths' restiveness stem from and center around such issue as total disconnection between people and the state in terms of infrastructural development in spite of spinning resources at the disposal of the state. To him, substance abuse is secondary and it is not a sufficient reason that can motivate the youths to restiveness compared to other pressing issues such as the establishing and or implementation of life changing programmes that can engage the idle youths. Implicitly, when the youths are fully engaged, it will reduce if not eliminate the seeming intractable violence in the Niger Delta region.

Conclusion

Niger Delta youths violence is not as a result of drug abuse, but rather an expression of displeasure over government's carefree attitude on their welfare. Most of the youths who relinquished their arms and ammunitions and were given the desired training and supported financially had already abandoned violence and embraced process to peaceful negotiation over what they want from government.

Recommendations

1. The federal government of Nigeria should as a matter of urgency design and develop programmes that will engage the youths so that they make meaning out of life.
2. Youths' commission should be formed for the region. The responsibility of the said commission among others should be to manage the affairs of the youths; ensuring that whatever welfare package designed should be fully accepted and adapted to by the youths.
3. Law enforcement agencies should intensify efforts to reduce or at best eliminate the sale and consumption of hard drugs in the region. This can be achieved through campaigns, seminars and workshops
4. There is the need to establish drug treatment centres in the region to address the challenge of the seeming intractable consumption of hard drugs in the region

References

- Adeleye M.C (2022). The Problem of Drug/Substance Abuse in Nigeria: A Symposium www.nafdac.gov.org. Retrieved 16-06-2022
- Akam, J. (2021). Substance Abuse Fuelling New Wave of Militancy in Niger Delta. Daily Post October 23
- Akpoighe, R & Ejovi A (2020). Youth Restiveness in Nigeria. Implication on Sustainable National Development. UJAH Special Edition 2 (3) 66-89. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4314.v2/i3.4>
- Buddy, T (2022). Addiction: An overview of Substance Use. www.verywellmind.com. Retrieved on 16-06-2022
- Iwarimie-Jaja D. (2013), "Criminology: the Criminologist's eye in re-occurring crime problems in Nigeria". An inaugural lecture series, no 105, 6th may 2013. University of Port Harcourt press ltd (uppl), UNIPORT.
- Ebuenyi C(2019). Tramadol Misuse in the Niger Delta, A Review of Cases Presenting Within One Year. Journal of Substance Use 24(5) www.tandfonline.cpm. Retrieved on 19-06-2022
- Ejumudo (2014) Youth Restiveness in the Niger Delta: A Critical Discourse. Journalssagepub.com. Retrieved 16-06-2022
- Igbo H.I (2013), "Causes, effects and ways of curbing youth restiveness in Nigeria"; implications for counseling, a journal of education and practice, vol 4 no 6, 2013 Benue State University.
- Inyang, B (2018). Militancy and Youth Restiveness in Niger Delta Region. LWATI: A Journal of Contemporary Research 15(4) 194-214
- Mandal A.(2021) What is Drug Abuse? News Medical and Life Science. www.newsmedical.net. Retrieved on 16-06-2022



Mohammed A (2010), Youth and the culture of violence in Nigeria Politics, Borno State University of Maiduguri publishers.

Mohammed I (2013), "The early Sociologists of Deviance", Department of Sociology, University of Maiduguri. a lesson handbook.

Nsidibe U.U, Emaimo I.E & Amah M.V (2017). Implication of Yputh Restiveness on Sustainable Development in Soputh-South, Nigeria. *Journal of Culture and Development* 19 (1)

Nweke, SS.A.N (2006). Principles of Crime Prevention and Detection in Nigeria. Enugu:De-Sanctity Publications

Ogumbameru OA (2010) "Sociological theory", revised and enlarged(edition, Timade ventures, Enuwa, He Ife.

Onyenucheya A (2017). SILEC Initiatives Takes Campaign against Drug Abuse to Niger Delta. Guardian, 20th November

Oromareghake P. et al (2013) "Youth restiveness and insecurity in Niger Delta", a focus on Delta State, Global Journals inc (USA) Delta state university.

Wokocha A.M (2007). Curbing the Culture of Violence the Role of Nigeria Teacher. *Journal of Education in Developing Areas* 16(1)