

Harvesting Political Potentials Of The Nigerian Youths For Good Governance And National Development Stability

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ABSTRACT

The thrust of this discourse was that Nigerian youths are not only feasible for exhibiting political violence and protests, their political potentials and skills can be guided by the state to facilitate good governance for effective national development, especially, when political leadership creates fora to tap youth political decisions and investigate potent factors likely to stimulate violence threatening national development political stability. The Nigerian youths are expected to play the following roles for national development: maintenance of political stability, boosting the economy, national service, combating insurgency and banditry, including projection of national interest and serve as active labour force. Political potentials of the youths can be harnessed for good governance through the following strategies: involvement of the youth in policy formulation, political education, orientation for self reliance, translation of public policies to the grassroots, leadership training and identified miscellaneous factors. Furthermore, relationship between good governance and control of youth restiveness can be achieved through: allowing the youth freedom of expression, rapid response investigation to youths responsible demands, control of social insecurity, dialogue and education for economic improvement. The restraining factors in this discourse were highlighted, while recommendations such as timely control of youth violence, youth empowerment, supportive use of the youths for good governance among others were put forward.

Keywords: Political potentials, Nigerian youth, good governance and national development stability.

INTRODUCTION

Rising youth unemployment is undesirable for effective national co-ordinated development stability in Nigeria. Unemployment or joblessness predisposes massive youth population involvement in all forms of unimaginable social ills, such as crimes, rape, fraud, banditry, kidnapping, youth restiveness, wanton destruction of lives and properties as evidenced in the “end SARs” (special Anti-Robbery squad) episode in Nigeria very recently is condemnable. It is high time issues about youth empowerment, education, rehabilitation, training, restoration and most conspicuously involvement in political decisions of the state were given strategic attention, bold efforts and commitment to thrive by successive governments, political leaders and traditional rulers at various strata of the Nigerian society.

Political violence is the disruption of the political process in a country in a manner that are injurious to individuals lives and properties. It amounts to social disorder and disorganization of the peaceful process in a polity through social crises, riots and protests. Political violence may be executed for political reasons (Aniwofose 1982 & Ikpe, 2010). Ediyang (2016) stressed “... political violence aims at influencing decisions directly or

indirectly. Some attempt to control the state machinery of decision making, some attempt to cripple the state, while others attempt to change the entire state structure". Military coups, terrorist activities, youth restiveness and social protests are forms of political violence. The current youth protest on end of police brutality in Nigeria is a form of political violence, intended to restore and recognize the fundamental human rights of Nigerian citizens from unjustified abuse by the police as official state security agent.

The Nigerian youth from age of one to thirty five are the active population, whose welfare, voices, aspirations and appropriate needs should be built into formulation of public policies, in order to achieve stable national development, devoid of intermittent disruption by youth restiveness, violence and social disorder. Every human society needs stable and good governance for meaningful (national) development and (political stability) to take place (Zakari & Onoja, 2011). Good governance coordinates national affairs to favour the youth, children and the aged. The youth most potentially ought to be involved in management of national affairs. In clearer terms, the youth in Nigeria should be given opportunity to "... express their common and collective desires..." (Gbenda, 2005), as a guide and feedback of good governance, in order to have pre-insights into the political, economic and social needs of the youth population. There is earnest need to exalts, uplift and utilize our talents (youths) and resources credibly by leadership for realistic national development stability (Mezieobi, 2016). This could be done through dialogue, involvement of youth in political decision making, leadership training, rendering national service among others.

Todaro (1977), Mezieobi (1994), Mkpka (1999) among others conceptualized national development as multi-integrated process, multi-dimensional and multi-faceted. The level of preservation, protection of human rights and the psychological needs of the youth populace is an integral part of national development. National development stability is achieved through sustained peace, social order, responsiveness to masses (youth) needs and aspirations. This paper for clear understanding will deliberate on: The Nigerian youth and national development, strategies of harnessing political potentials of Nigerian youths for good governance, relationship between good governance and control of youth restiveness, including associated constraints of the study.

Conceptual Framework

Nwosu (2012) refers political development as an essential indices of national development. It concerns quality of political leadership and extent of freedom in incorporating the political welfare of the citizens in almost all political decision matters of the government of the nation. According to Mu'azu (1995:78) "... our youth will grow up and in time will operate the affairs of nation... The way youth are built will inevitably determine the shape of things to come ...". In the context of this study, the Nigerian youth voices, aspirations

and needs has to be incorporated into nation's political decisions in order to achieve sustainable governance and political stability.

Youth political potentials are the creative civic behaviours, social intervention actions, social services, credible leadership qualities, including national assignments roles, innovative revolutionary ideals and ideas, political opinions and positive national action, scientific and technological skills rendered towards national development. In contrast, disastrous criminal activities as youth involvement in riots, kidnapping, vandalisation of oil pipe lines, advanced fee fraud, gangster rape, terrorism, insurgency, banditry, arson, destruction of lives and properties are not youth political potentials. It is therefore instructive that only youth political potentials should be harnessed for national development. The exemplary, laudable and appreciable conducts of the youth, ought to be commended and fronted for national development adoption.

The youth in Nigeria constitute the active citizens of the nation (from age of one to thirty five and a little beyond) who are viable in transforming the economy through their productive input and services in the civil service, private and corporate organizations. The negative use of the youth in destabilizing social order, security and national stability of Nigerian state through despicable acts such as unwarranted riots, willful and unlawful destruction of lives and property, armed robbery, religious disturbances, kidnapping, armed banditry, terrorist activities among others are glaring acts of sabotage antithetical to effective national building (national development and national security) in Nigeria (Mezieobi, Nwaubani & Anyanwu, 2012). The thesis of this discourse is that the youth as significant population of Nigerians, ought to lend voice to national policies, their future welfare in terms of employment and skills for livelihood should be seriously catered for, in order to avert violent youth crises, protests and social disorder that will frustrate good governance and national development stability. Impliedly, the youth and government should work in coordinated harmony to ensure profound peace and national stability in Nigeria.

Akpochafo (2010) averred that good governance is political leadership coordinated effects in management of state affairs for general public good. Jega (2007:158) defined good governance as "responsibility and responsiveness of public officials – both elected and appointed or the governors to the electorate, the governed, as well as acting in accordance with their dictates". Good governance protects the welfare of all citizens of a nation, especially the vulnerable youths whose future appear to be dimmed by political corruption, national and global economic recession. Bad governance culminates significantly in government irresponsiveness to masses genuine welfare needs. This scenario when not actively addressed adequately, generates crises of political undertone (Uzoukwu, 2015).

National development extensively incorporates total activities of man purposefully directed at economic, social, political and technological transformation and reformation of

nations aimed at achieving progressive change to be competitive and productively relevant in the globe (Mezieobi & Mezieobi, 2012). It is therefore implied that national development is not restricted to advancement in economic affairs alone, it includes man's comprehensive triumph in their divergent needs, specifically, the needs, aspirations and management of youth affairs for sustainable national development stability. The youth in Nigeria form a significant percentage of the purported 200 million and above population, their general welfare, quality of education, health status, employment opportunities, civic behaviour, national consciousness and lots more should be the strategic concern of successive governments, in order to fortify the unity, progress and stabilization of democracy in Nigeria. It is youth with organized and hopeful future that would be apt for sustained national development. National development stability portrays the effectiveness, strength and co-ordinated leadership and citizens attitude keep Nigeria formidably united.

The Nigerian Youth and National Development

The Nigerian youths are expected to play the following roles for national development:

1. **Maintenance of political stability:** The Nigerian youths ought to desist from acts of violence, riots, kidnapping, rape amongst others that affect general political stability. It is the duty of Nigeria and Nigerians (youths) to ensure good human rapport, ethnic, religious and political tolerance, and promotion of a peaceful and harmonious co-existence (Akpachafo, 2010:92). National development drive in harnessing youth political potentials for good governance, can only be appropriately exploited in a serene, peaceful conducive and inspiring political climate.
2. **Boosting the economy:** The youth are expected to direct their creative energies, intellectual strengths and pursuits in involving in meaningful self-reliant job creative projects, promotion of agriculture to avert looming national food crises, partaking vigorously in small medium scale industrial ventures and lots more. The Nigerian government has earmarked 72 billion naira for – National youth investment fund, this venture if appropriately distributed and genuinely allocated to the advantage of the Nigerian youths, will serve useful purpose for youth engagement and economic growth. Some international agencies are actively supporting job creation for youth as a means of curtailing armed violence and inclusively projecting economic development. Peace building is strengthened by empowering the youth with meaningful skills for life survival (World Bank 2008, UN 2009 & ILO, 2010).
3. **National service:** The youth should be repositioned to play critical role in national development, in such areas as protecting national interest as security guards, peace builders, crime detectors, agriculturists, manufacturers, creators of innovative ideologies, decision makers and so on, rather than being misguided and utilized for

- terrorist acts of destabilizing national peace, security of lives and property (Mezieobi, 2014). The youth can also be meaningfully utilized in environmental conservation, sanitation, environmental cleanliness, raising national awareness of endemic and pandemic diseases, functioning as forest guards, security intelligence and so on.
4. **Combating insurgency and banditry:** Effiom and Ediyang (2013) alarmed “the most current Nigeria’s challenge is the issue of national insecurity”. The youth can be useful in combating insurgency and banditry by volunteering information to the military and other security agents. They should be willing to enroll into military, police, civil defence and customs services for the protection of national security. Insurgents and bandits are youths who can be resocialised into good conducts by their peers through family and societal contacts. Ololobou (2004) claimed that youth restiveness has root in poor family socialization and as such dissident youths can be identified and resuscitated via their family linkages.
 5. **Projection of national interest:** Nigerian youths have the mandatory obligation to project Nigeria’s image among nations, project the culture and national philosophies, uphold the unity and defence of the constitution through responsible behaviour and contribution to national development stability. This scenario calls for qualitative youth manpower political development education, in corroboration, Ohueri (1999:43) noted “... a country which is unable to develop the skills and knowledge of its (youths) and utilize them effectively in the national... (Development process) will be unable to develop anything else”.
 6. **Active labour force:** The Nigerian youth constitute the active labour force and drivers of the economy. There ought to be symbiotic relationship between government and the youth to enhance their productivity and ascertain their woes as most of them are underemployed or unemployed. There is a link between youth unemployment and their involvement in armed conflicts (Collier, 2003). The increasing mass unemployed youths provides foundation for legal and illegitimate national protests.

Strategies of Harnessing Political Potentials of Nigerian Youths for Good Governance

The political potentials of the Nigerian youths can be utilized by political leadership for good governance in the following ways:

1. **Involvement of the Youth in Policy Formulation:** The political leadership is expected to exercise political will in strengthening machinery or processes of dialoguing, explaining national issues and challenges, soliciting youth input into national policies that will affect significant youth population, especially employment, job generation, self-reliance, national security and so on. Osakwe (2010) contributed that the potent way of resolving youth crises is through political

- and non-military solution. Furthermore, youth restiveness should always be addressed through non-confrontation or use of state coercive security agents but a cautions investigation of stimulating factors are necessary in order to secure sustainable peace, (national development) stability in Nigeria (Mezieobi, 2014). The use of soldiers to quench end of SARS youth protest in October 2020 in Nigeria, escalated the violence, threatening the peace and political stability of Nigeria, through unwarranted massive killings, arson, looting, destruction of security offices and personnel, seizure of ammunition and so on.
2. **Political education:** Political education and sensitization is key to ameliorating youth protests, violence and restiveness. Against this background, Onuoha (2001) asserted that political education would tame youth senseless involvement in unwarranted riots, deeper understanding of democratic principles, exhibition of responsible behaviours, protection of human rights, critique of the excesses of government in power and confidence to assume political leadership. Similarly, Ochiagha (1994) advanced that Nigerian youths as legitimate members and leaders of tomorrow, ought to be given sense of direction, citizenship and political education in order to prepare them for good governance and equipped with capabilities of confronting challenges of national development.
 3. **Orientation for self-reliance:** Unemployment poses a great danger to Nigeria's economic growth and national development. The growth of unemployment is alarmingly frightening. 70% of the youth population are Jobless (Yesufu, 2000). Jobless youths sporadic growth rate is a potential danger to national security, peace and stability of the Nigerian nation. Corroboratively, Nwankwo (1986) condemns abject poverty, anxiety and lingering insecurity in Nigeria. The fiercest insecurity in Nigeria is growing youth unemployment and emanating crimes from their non economic meaningful engagement for livelihood survival.
The Nigerian youth should be orientated towards self-reliance and self-employability through skills acquisition on entrepreneurial information education. However, it is notable that the greater the employment opportunities generated by any economy (as encouraged by political leaders, governments, private and corporate bodies), the better its performance in terms of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and better standard of living of its citizenry (Musa & Ibrahim, 2011).
 4. **Translation of public policies to the grassroots:** The youth as the active population can be used in Disseminating vital public policies, laws, health policies, issues on agriculture and environmental protection, security information, national consciousness awareness and general information of public importance from government to the grassroots. The synergy between the youth and government will facilitate public administration and national political stability. In addition, it will be

- a process of empowering the youth for leadership and contribution to responsible national, state and local service.
5. **Leadership training:** The Nigeria youth need be given a robust space for leadership training. The quest for leadership training of the youth in political decision making was amplified by Dasuma and Adaji (2011) who suggested "... opportunities (should be provided by political leadership) for the development of leadership talents even among the youths, who are leaders of tomorrow". Grooming and training the youth in governance help to illuminate national challenges, expose them to the processes of governance and ways of improving Nigeria's national development. Partnership with the youth and government will create political space for peace, social order and unity to thrive in Nigeria's political space.
 6. **Miscellaneous:** The youth can be empowered to empower others, leadership training to train their peers, political education to tame violence in their ranks, projection of national interest, render community service and assist in checking insecurity prevalence.

Relationship between Good Governance and Control of Youth Restiveness

Good governance can control youth restiveness in the following ways:

1. **Freedom of expression:** One of the indices of good governance is transparency, democracy and responsiveness to the needs of all sectors of the nation, especially the youths. The youth should be given fora to express and marshall out their needs and challenges to government. This is because "conflict arise from the pursuit of divergent interests, goals and aspirations by individuals and, or groups in defined social and physical environment" (Emeka, 2016: 586). This process will enable government set machinery for addressing youth problems and concerns, progressively to avert explosion into violence.
Development plans could be sectoral in order to satisfy special felt needs like youth empowerment, training and economic engagement. Public policies meant to empower youths in Nigeria need periodic reassessment, reformulation, evaluation and objectives with clear implementation.
2. **Rapid response and investigation to youths responsible demands:** Timely intervention of Nigerian government to youth protests would help to nip fierce youth violence in the bud. As rightly pointed out by Mezieobi (2014), the state need respond swiftly to calm down youth violence as it is inimical to national security and progressive national development. In addition, it is revealed that the end 'SARS' violent protest would have been averted if past Nigerian governments and Buhari's administration intervened on time (Akinkuotu, 2020). The involvement of the military ignited and exploded violence as hoodlums hijacked the lawless

- situation to loot, destroy lives and properties, to a level never imagined in Nigeria's historical past and social experience.
3. **Control of general insecurity:** When the government in power recognizes attention to youth sensitive demands, there will be rapport and harmonization of relationship between the youth and political leaders. This scenario creates peaceful governance and guarantees specific and special attention to youth empowerment. Without contradictions "... conditions of (events) today (in Nigeria's state) show very clearly that peace, stability and security are pre-requisites for (national) development" (Ojo 1995:268).
 4. **Dialogue:** Good governance allows meaningful discussions rather than endless confrontations with the youth that expands the scope of violence and protests. Liberal democracy encourage individuals contributions of their intellectual talents opinions and freedom of expression to the process of state governance. Against this background, David (2011) hinted "Government (of a nation state must be based on the consent of governed (youth)".
 5. **Education for economic improvement:** The youth of Nigeria can be educated and sensitized on skills and services that would improve their economic fortunes and work opportunities in the labour market. This is already done in Nigeria through various federal government social interventions projects. As rightly reported by Amaize (2020) "the only thing that it will take for Nigeria to survive is the will to do the right thing...". The right thing to do is to monitor and expand the scope of social interventions in view of youth expanding population, to ensure that the programme is not frustrated by corruption and ruthless favouritism.

Constraints

The restraining factors in this discourse are identified as follows:

- Leadership corruption may influence federal government of Nigeria youth social interventions, as the vulnerable youths may not benefit substantially.
- There is likely to be politicization of youth intentions for protection of human rights and provision of welfare services. The youth may be used to incite violence against the incumbent political leadership. It is instructive to note that political leaders cannot effectively manipulate well educated, healthy, comfortable living Nigerian (youths) in order to achieve cheap political gains of violence (political Bureau, 1987). Poverty as a vicious circle stimulates political violence.
- Declining state of national economy may affect Nigeria's government level of youth empowerment.
- The youth demands may not be collated under a unified leadership, in this case the objectives of youths may not be straight forward to address.

- The abject non political will to accommodate youth in political decisions is a serious threat.
- To contain youth restiveness and violence in Nigeria effectively may take time to be realized, this is because unemployment affects psychological well being of culprits (Akiri, 2005). Unemployed youths are psychologically, spiritually, spiritually, morally and mentally frustrated. They feel a hopeless future and are psychologically trumatised, a situation that lays foundation for youth restiveness at the slightest provocation, even in unwarranted events for their actions.

Chaos theory was propounded by Tom Peters in 1942. The theory recognize that events are ... rarely controlled... (and) that (as social) system (grow) to more complexity, as they do so, they become more volatile” (Oluwuo & Nwabueze, 2016: 18). The theory illustrates that social systems of social groups in terms of expansion, grow into complexity, that social order and control cannot be effectively effected.

In the case of this discourse, the youth protests and demands were heeded to by Nigerian government, when the youth group became volatile and went into rampage and social destruction. This theory has a link to this study, the Nigerian youth has grown into a complex structure with complex demands and objectives. It will take the Nigerian government efficient management to decipher their real objectives.

Conclusion

The Nigerian youth are expected to express anger without visibly undertaking to brutal protests as evident in the end SARS political violence in Nigeria, which translated to destruction of lives and properties. The Nigerian youths can be utilized by political leaders positively for effective governance, by creating rapport, fora and windows to extract their grievances, input and desires to the government in power. The Nigerian youth should be rehabilitated, empowered and democratically involved in formulating sectoral and general policies crafted for their interest and citizens of Nigeria. Youths are expected to be engaged in legitimate lawful protest without Jeopardising the peace, political stability and national security. The Nigerian youths potentials can be harnessed to facilitate sustainable national development in Nigeria.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were tendered in view of the ensuing discourse:

- The senators and Honourable members of the House of Representatives ought to approach youth problems at the grassroots and relay their findings to the presidency and other political leaders at the state, local government including corporate bodies. This would help to checkmate youth violence from escalating.
- The lessons to be learnt from the end of SARS protest are that social problems that are critically criticized and condemned by credible Nigerians, with manifest facts

- of occurrences and are aversive to existence of peace, social order and harmony in Nigeria ought to be addressed and investigated before they explode and yield disastrous consequences to national development.
- The youths ought to be used comprehensively in making vital public policies or community based decisions, so as to be carried along with the process, progress and challenges of national development (Mezieobi, 2014).
 - The youth population significantly need to be empowered through employment, entrepreneurial education and their sensitive demands catered for, this would prevent them from being utilized by nefarious politicians to instigate political violence and social disorder.
 - Social interventions provided by the federal government for the youth, should be monitored to ensure that a large segment benefits without being subjugated by corruption and politicization.
 - Engagement of the youth population in meaningful economic activities is a strategic process of stabilizing peace, national security and averting looming crises of violence in the Nigerian nation.
 - Leadership with visions for uplifting the masses from poverty and suffocating economic crises is ideal. The provision of sustainable peace and security is the ultimate for enduring national development in Nigeria (Mezieobi, Mezieobi & Alu, 2016). Leadership political will to lift the youth out of poverty and empower them significantly is ideal for sustainable national development.
 - The Nigerian youth need political socialization to groom them for effective leadership and stimulate their national consciousness spirit, including moral development capabilities to express anger without embarking on violence.

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