

## Curbing Youth Restiveness in A Distressed Economy

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### **Abstract**

*This study is a survey designed to find out the causes of youth restiveness and how to curb it in a distressed economy in Umuahia, Abia State. Interview schedule (IS) was the instrument designed and used by the researcher to collect data for the study. The population of the study was all the street hawkers in Umuahia, Abia state. However, 1,550 youths hawking wears of all types constituted the sample, randomly picked from 16 streets/roads in Umuahia urban. Descriptive statistics of frequency counts and percentages were used to analyse the data collected. Findings of the study revealed that streets hawking of wears of all categories is a major problem steaming from socio-economic background, poverty, unemployment, marginalization, discrimination, illiteracy, corruption, frustration, child labour, lack of funds and school drop-out were the causes of youth restiveness. Based on the findings, conclusions and recommendation were made on the way forward.*

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### **Introduction**

The nation Nigeria is faced with numerous problems that make the youth wonder if the country is the right place for them to stay or go away, this is because the country at the moment is at a cross-road in her educational, political and socio-economic developments. This, is made worst by our political leaders who now treat hardwork and quality education with levity. The resultant effect is decays in infrastructure, poor funding, examination malpractice, drop-outs, crime, political thuggery, cultism, prostitution, ritual killings, get rich syndrome, corruption, banditry, kidnapping for ransom, unemployment and other forms of youth restiveness.

This clearly shows that in a contemporary Nigerian society today, Nigerian youths are face with serious challenges as a result of economic meltdown caused by distressed in the economy, politics of exclusion and winner takes all. The main thrust of this paper therefore, is to examine the concept of education, youth, youth restiveness, distressed, economy and causes of youth restiveness. Others are the measures to curb the problems, conclusion and recommendations on the way forward.

### **Concept of Education**

Education is the process by which a person systematically acquires the basic knowledge, practical skills and desirable attitudes vital to the tutorial development and growth of himself and community (Ofodilem 2015). This means that the basic aim of education in the contemporary Nigerian society today is to equip the individuals within a given society with the knowledge and skills that will enable him not only to become abreast with his daily problems but also to adjust himself to the ever-changing societal needs, aspirations and expectations. It is therefore, necessary that access to education should be an inalienable right of every citizen of Nigeria no matter his/her age, race and creed, if National development is to be accelerated and youth restiveness stopped (Udensi, 2015).

Thus, the concept of education in a distressed economy should be one that brings about socio-economic and political change in behavior of every youth in Nigerian, in order to reduce to the barest minimum, the current youth restiveness in society. That is why the concept; education, is viewed by Nwafor (2019) as a process of assisting the individual child or youth to attain the fullest, the life he or she is capable of living. This will involve training youth to enable them to acquire new knowledge, skills, information and change of attitudes or behaviour in order for him or her to adjust and be more productive and functional to him or her in the society and their respective environment. This stems from the fact that it is through education that ignorance is eliminated, skills for productivity and leadership acquired and the key to future productivity comfort acquired (Shokunbi, 2015).

### **Concept of Youth**

Youth is a state of being young in age. According to Hornby (2020), it is part of life following childhood. To Adeyemi (2017) it is the period of existence preceding maturity. This means the concept “youth”, can be regarded as the whole early part of life, from childhood to adulthood. In some countries, youths start from the age of eighteen to fifty years while in others youths start from the age of twenty to forty-five. This is why any child or young person or infancy that attain adulthood or adolescent age, is regarded as a youth. Some people call them the young at heart while others regard them as the future leaders of the country because they are energetic and ready to go.

### **Concept of Youth Restiveness**

This is a situation whereby an individual whether a youth or an adult becomes restless or not comfortable with the situation on the ground. Ugwu (2011) regarded it as a situation that makes an individual unable to stay still, quiet or uneasy in any situation. Some psychologists like Ugwu (2011), Ukoha (2015) and Adeyemi (2017) regarded it as a situation of continually moving, nervousness, discontented and unwillingness to be controlled because you feel cheated by parents, government, friends, loved ones or society in which you live.

When one suffers from such situation or starts having such feelings within him, he or she becomes bored and feels the only way out of the situation is to break the peace, revolt against the society or the powers that be, to show their discontent of the situation on ground hence he rebel or react violently against constituted authority.

### **Concept of Distress**

Hornby (2020) defined distressed as a state of unable to move, anxiousness, uneasy and faded. In other words, distressed is looking or feeling disturbed due to unforeseen circumstances caused by the situation one found himself. It can be a sign of danger and difficulty in meeting individual, groups or society or ethnic or religious group needs, hence they become restless or upset with the situation. It is the anxiety, confusion, sufferings and hardship that is associated with distress that makes one or groups of people to feel extremely upset, and start looking for a way out of it.

### **Concept of Economy**

Economy means the relationship between production, trade and supply of money in a particular country. According to Orie (2020) economy is an effective management of human and material resources of a community or a system of the economy. To Anyanwuocha (2020), it is the study of money, currency and trade for effective and efficient use of resources. In a nutshell, economy is the system of production, distribution and consumption of goods and services. In other words, the overall measure of a country's system is known as the national economy or the economy of the country.

### **The Concept of Distressed Economy**

The economic history of the free-market capitalist countries has shown that the period of economic prosperity or expansion alternates with the period of contraction or recession. Those alternating period of expansion and contraction in economic activity is called business cycles. The period of high income and employment has been called the period of expansion upswing or prosperity in economy. The period of low-income output and employment has been described as contraction, recession, down-swing or depression.

According to Orie (2020) during the period of distressed, recession and depression of economy, many workers lose their jobs and as a result, large scale, unemployment which causes loss of output that could have been produced with full employment of resources, comes to prevail in the economy. In addition, during distressed, recession or depression many businessmen go bankrupt and suffer huge loss. Distressed economy causes a lot of human sufferings and lowers the levels of living of the people. Thus, fluctuations in economic activities of the country creates a lot of uncertainty in the economy which causes anxiety to the individuals about the future income and employment opportunities.

There is therefore low profits for some companies as their profits are at the lower ebb, due to lack of confidence in economic prospects. As a result, many firms are unwilling to risk new investment as a result of the distress in the economy. Unemployment, crimes, laid off youth restiveness such as kidnapping, banditry, ritual killings, drop-out, rape and stealing among the youths are at the increase; with the economy out of a trough (recession, distress or depression) ageing equipment are replaced, employment, income and rate of consumption and spending, starts showing signs of recovery and peoples expectation becomes more favourable (Anyanwuocha; 2020)

Thus, distressed economy or recession or economic contraction or depression as in 1930s and 2019 covid era is generally regarded in the world and Nigeria as a down-turn in economic activity. This means that a distressed economy is commonly defined as a fall in real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for two period successive quarters. As output falls Orie (2020) noted, employment and household incomes also falls, Profits drops and some company's experiences

difficulties in payment of staff salaries, increase production and the resultant effect is jobs loss and unemployment, crime in society and youths' frustration which later result in youth restiveness.

This means that distressed economy is associated with unemployment, high rate of crimes and cost output. When the actual Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is below potential (GDP), economic waste and human suffering result from the failure to use the economy's resources at their normal intensity of use. This shows that booms, although associated with high employment and high output, but can be sources of problems of their own to government and companies when these down turn occurs in the economy, the youth who are leaders of tomorrow becomes restive.

### **Causes of Youth Restiveness in Nigeria**

According to Okafor, (2021) and James (2022), frustration, winner takes all, politics of exclusion, unemployment and strangulation of Nigerians plus over marginalization of the people have brought about youth restiveness. This has brought about socio-economic woes, corruption, political thuggery and assassination of political opponents, thereby turning the country into blood-bath. Public officers who are supposed to be showing examples to others, now have become promoters of corruption and creator of two classes of people in society; "the rich and the poor" or "down-trodden".

The level of unemployment in the country are making people to doubt the sincerity of hard work or going to school as students now see examination malpractice in Nigeria as a normal norm to success. The youths are now beginning to doubt if there will ever be reversal in the trend.

This situation, Nwafor (2010) noted is made worst by the fact that every year, universities, colleges of education and polytechnics turn out thousands of graduates that roam the major streets of Nigerian cities hawking wears, food, petrol and in search of white-collar jobs that is nonexistence unless you know somebody that knows another person. Favouritism and nepotism are therefore the order of the day. This has resulted in high rate of crime in society as people hardly sleep with their two eyes closed.

The most worrisome aspect of the whole situation Umar (2019) noted is that inspite of the elaborate youth empowerment policies put in place by government towards finding solution to the problem, numerous youths educated and non-educated are still searching for what to do that is worthwhile as the future of those in the schools look bleak while those that drop-out of school or uneducated are confused of what the future holds in stock for them. In attempt to enhance their quality of life, youth across the country according to Ngohi (2018) now venture into numerous self-employment opportunities such as (dyeing, taxi/bus driving, Okada, going, achaba and tailoring) others now indulge in poultry and fish farming, snail farming, leather work, petrol hawking, kidnapping for ransom, ritual killings for money, banditry, prostitution by the girls, early marriage and internet fraud popularly called yahoo yahoo boys just to make a living.

A visible scene as you drive or walk along the streets of Umuahia and our nation's schools is that of youths displaying and hawking the wears, food stuff and petrol in different areas while those of them who happens to be in schools indulge in sorting, dubbing, giraffing, expo, microchips and impersonation in the name, "they want to pass their examination at all cost". Students, teachers and even parents are part of the problem as they want to pass their wards at all cost. Those students who cannot pass through the hardship of school and examination, end up dropping out of school to become thugs for political parties and criminals. Some of them Nwafor and Maduagwu (2015) noted turned to cultism and other aggressive measures in expression of the situation they find

themselves. Today in our society, cultism, school drop-out, unemployment, distressed economy have affected many of them, to the extent they have graduated into serious societal problems of which youth restiveness, arm robbery, political thuggery and other crimes is now the order of the day.

Child labour is another cause of youth restiveness in our society. Children of school going age are supposed to be in school but many of them end up in streets hawking goods and services to help their parents due to the socio-economic background. Poverty is therefore a serious cause of youth restiveness. These people discussed above portrays Nigeria as a lawless, poverty ridden and predominantly illiterate country (Fajoyomi and Musa, 2020). Hawking is a major problem stemming from socio-economic roots leading to increase in prices of goods and services, lawlessness and poverty. The quality in the distribution of wealth (rich and poor), “haves and have not”, gives birth to different levels of poverty within individual groups thereby creating room for youth restiveness due to inequality. As it is in the rural villages so also it is in the urban centres thereby creating class distinction in the society. Those not in the right divide or class resort to restiveness to press home other demands.

Care (2016) and Amis (2014) listed good education, eradication of illiteracy, employment, creation of job opportunities for the teeming youths of the country, provision of power supply in the rural communities, good governance at all levels of government, stopping marginalization of each section of the country, eradication of poverty, child labour, equal distribution of wealth, building of industries and making education free at all levels as ways of stopping or curbing youth restiveness in society. Based on the foregoing however, this study attempt to find out the causes of youth restiveness in our society in a distressed economy and how it can be curbed in Nigeria particularly Abia State,

### **Statement of the Problem**

Curbing youth restiveness in a distressed economy is an important factor in the period of economic meltdown or recession or depression. This is because economy provides a solid guide in solving the socio-economic and political development of the country. However, your restiveness in Nigeria particularly in Abia State in recent times has witness a rapid rise in agitation due to a number of challenges since the emergence of distressed economy. Although the distressed economy is a global problem that is more felt in developing countries such as Nigeria, it has greater adverse effect on the standard of living of people due to poverty, marginalization, inequality in wealth, abandonment, low saving, increase unemployment rate, youth restiveness and over dependency on others. The problem of this study therefore is to find out the causes of youth restiveness and how it can be curb in a distressed economy.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of the study was to find out the causes of youth restiveness and how to curb it in a distressed economy. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Identify causes of youth restiveness in a period of distressed economy.
2. Determine the influence of a distressed economy on youth restiveness.
3. Ascertain ways for curbing youth restiveness in a period of distressed economy.

## Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the causes of youth restiveness in a period of distressed economy?
2. What are the influences of a distressed economy on youth restiveness?
3. What are the ways for curbing youth restiveness in a period of distressed economy?

## Methodology

The study is a survey designed to find out the causes of youth restiveness and how to curbs it in Abia State. The population of the study comprised of all street hawkers in Umuahia, Abia State. However, for the purpose of this study, a sample of one thousand, five hundred and fifty (1550) youths were selected through purposeful random sampling techniques.

## Instrumentation

The instrument used for the study was an interview scheduled (IS) designed by the researcher. The instrument was divided into two sections. Section A sought information on Bio-data of the respondents while B was the instrument proper. The locations covered by the study include: Isi-gate, Orpet road, Uzuakoli road, Aba Road, Timber Road, Isi-court, Mission hill road, Umudike road, World bank estate road and Bende Road.

## Method of Data Analysis

The data collected for the study were analyzed using simple descriptive statistical technique of frequency counts and percentages.

## Results

The results are presented according to the research questions that guided the study

**Table 1:** frequency and percentage responses on the causes of youth restiveness in a period of distressed economy

s/n	Causes	Frequency	percentages
1	Unemployment	120	7.74
2.	Marginalization	90	5.80
3.	Frustration	110	7.10
4.	Strangulation	115	7.47
5.	Socio-economic roots	120	7.74
6.	Corruption	125	8.06
7.	Inequality	135	8.70
8.	Poverty	145	9.35
9.	Illiteracy	125	8.06
10.	Child labour	145	9.35
11.	Distressed economy	130	8.38
12.	School dropout	40	2.58
13.	Crime	50	3.22
14.	Cultism	20	1.29
15.	Lack of power supply	80	5.16
	Grand total	1,550	100.00



Table 1 reveals the views of the respondents on the causes of youth restiveness in a period of distressed economy. Street hawkers in Umuahia who are youths rated items 1-15 7.74, 5.80, 7.10, 7.47, 7.74, 8.06, 8.70, 9.35, 8.06, 9.35, 8.38, 2.58, 3.22, 1.29 and 5.16 percent respectively. Items 8,10,7,11,9,5,1,4,3,2,15,13,12,14, and 15 are rated 9.35, 9.35, 8.70, 8.38, 8.06, 7.74, 7.47, 7.47, 7.10, 5.80, 5.16, 3.22, 2.58 and 1.29 respectively in order of their priority. This means that youths who are into street hawking in Umuahia are of the views that the main cause of youth restiveness are poverty, child labour, inequality, distress economy, corruption, illiteracy, unemployment, socio-economic roots strangulation, frustration and marginalization, etc.

**Table 2:** Frequency and percentage response on the influence of Distressed Economy on Youth Restiveness

s/n	Influence of Distressed Economy	Frequency	percentages
16.	Poverty in the family	130	8.38
17.	Inequality in the society	155	10.00
18.	Marginalization of the people	135	8.70
19.	Over-dependency on others	155	10.00
20.	Problem of ill-health	145	9.35
21.	Low standard of living	135	8.70
22.	Inflation	130	8.30
23.	In ability to meet economic needs	125	8.06
24.	Unemployment	120	7.74
25.	High crime rate in society	100	6.45
26.	Class distinction	130	8.52
27.	Urban slump	90	5.80
	Grand total	1,550	100.00

Table 2 indicates the response of the respondents on the influence of distressed economy on youth restiveness. A look at the table revealed that items 16-27 are rated with 8.38, 10.00, 8.70, 10.00, 9.35, 8.70, 8.30, 8.06, 7.74, 6.45, 8.52 and 5.80 percentage scores respectively. The respondents rated items 17, 19, 20, 18, 21, 26, 22 23, 24, 25 and 58 high in order of their priority respectively. This means that youths who are street hawkers in Umuahia, Abia State feel that inequality, over-dependency on others, ill-health, low standard of living, marginalization of people, class distinction, poverty in the family, inflation, inability to meet economic needs amongst other are the main factor influencing youth restiveness in a distressed economy.

**Table 3:** Frequency and percentage responses on the ways for curbing Youth Restiveness in a period of Distressed Economy

s/n	Influence of Distressed Economy	Frequency	percentages
28.	Creating job opportunities	130	8.40
29.	Provision of power in rural villages	155	10.00
30.	Good governance	135	8.70
31.	Stopping all forms of marginalization	155	10.00
32.	Eradication of poverty	145	9.35
33.	Abolition of child labour	135	8.70
34.	Education of the youths	130	8.40

35.	Eradication of illiteracy	125	8.06
36.	Employment of teaming youths	120	7.74
37.	Building of industries	100	6.45
38.	Moral education of the youth	100	6.45
39.	Stopping corruption	30	1.93
40.	Equal distribution of wealth	90	5.82
	Grand total	1,550	100.00

Table 3 presents the opinions of the respondents on the ways for curbing youth restiveness in a period of distressed economy. Items 28-40 are rated with 8.40, 10.00, 8.70, 10.00, 9.35, 8.40, 8.30, 8.06, 7.74, 6.45, 6.45, 1.93 and 5.82 percentage scores respectively. The ratings are 10.00, 10.00, 9.35, 8.70, 8.70, 8.40, 8.40, 8.06, 7.74, 6.45, 6.45, 5.82 and 1.93 for items 29, 31, 32, 30, 33, 28, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 40 and 39 in that order respectively. They rated stopping of marginalization, provision of power supply, eradication of poverty, abolish child labour, education of the youths, creation of job opportunities, eradication of illiteracy, employment, establishment of industries, moral education, equal distribution of wealth and stoppage of corruption.

## Discussion

From the result of the percentage score of the respondents on the issues raised, it is obvious that there are similarities in the ratings of streets hawkers at Umuahia whether from Orpet, Ubakala, Isi-gate, Isieke, Ibeku, World Bank housing estate, Mission hills or Amachare on the questions asked on youth restiveness.

The result of research question one (1) on the causes of youth restiveness in a distressed economy indicates that poverty, child labour, distressed economy, marginalization, inequality, socio-economic roots or background of the youth, frustration, unemployment and illiteracy are the major causes. Others include corruption, illiteracy, cultism, strangulation and lack of power supply. This find is in line with Okafor (2021) and James (2022). Who opined that frustration, unemployment, strangulation and marginalization of Nigerian youths across the country are the main cause(s) of youth restiveness in the country. This is also in line with the views expressed by Nwafor (2019) and Umar (2017) who noted how nepotism and favouritism had forced many youths to venture into areas they would not like if not for distressed of the economy.

Research questions two on the influence of distressed economy on youth restiveness shows that poverty in the family, inequality in the society, marginalization of the people, over dependency on others for food and help, ill-health, low standard of living, inflation (money chasing few goods), inability and unemployment rate were at the high level in the society. This find was in line with findings made by Nwafor and maduagwu (2015), Ngohi (2018) who revealed that the influence of distressed economy is attributed to unemployment, marginalization, frustration, corruption in society and high crime rate in society. This implies that distressed economy has much influence on youth restiveness because of the inability of their respective families to get access to funds that could be used to improve the living conditions of the family.

The findings on the way to curb youth restiveness in a distressed economy indicate that creating job opportunities, provision of power in the rural areas, good governance, eradication of poverty, stopping of discrimination and marginalization on the basis of religion and tribe, education of the youths, stopping of corruption, child labour, eradication of illiteracy and equal distribution of wealth are ways of curbing youth restiveness in the society. These findings were in agreement with CARE (2016) and AMIS (2014) who listed good education, eradication of



illiteracy, employment creation of job opportunities for the teaming youths of the country, good governance, provision of power supply, equal distribution of wealth, establishment of industries, eradication of poverty and child labour as a way of curbing youth restiveness in their respective families in a situation like this.

### **Conclusion**

Considering the findings of the study, there is the need for curbing youth restiveness in a period of distressed economy. This is evident in the finding of this study which indicated that curbing youth restiveness can only be eradicated if youths are provided with gainful employment, supported with enough finance to support their businesses, giving them education, training them on vocational skills, eradication of poverty, marginalization, discrimination and establishment of cottage industries amongst other needs. The findings have led the researcher to conclude that enhancing creativity, ability to invest on youth education and youth empowerment programmes is significantly related to ways of curbing and improving the management of family finance to stop youth restiveness. It was therefore concluded that low standard of living, inability to meet family needs and high level of poverty, illiteracy, discrimination, marginalization, corruption, lack of political will on the part of government, unemployment and inequality in society are the major influence of distressed economy on family financial resources which can trigger youth restiveness in the society.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made bearing in mind the need to curbing youth restiveness in a distressed economy.

1. Government should provide youths with micro-finance to enable them invest in a business of their choice that can give them income generation eg tailoring.
2. Corruption syndrome should be check by government of the day. This is to help reduce the problems of unemployment and poverty in the society.
3. self-employment opportunity should be created by government and the private sectors for income generation.
4. youths should be empowered to enable them learn vocational skills that will enable them on graduating to be self-reliance.
5. Entrepreneurship education should be step up in all secondary schools, colleges and universities by making it compulsory for all students at all levels of the education system in Nigeria.
6. Government should assist youths and their families with resources to reduce the influence of distressed economy on their families.
7. Government should embark on public enlightenment of the youths on the dangers of drug abuse, ritual killings, kidnapping, banditry and other social devices that tend to disturb the society there by creating youth restiveness. This government can do by organizing workshops, conferences, seminars, distribution of handbills, posters and jingles on the radio and television on the need to learn vocational skills for the youths.

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