

COUNSELLING YOUTHS FOR NATIONAL HEALING

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Abstract

This paper discusses the issues of counselling youths against restiveness, political participation, unemployment and drug & substance abuse. It explains how these affects the youths in Nigeria due to lack of properly giving them their proper place in the affairs of the country. It also stresses the counselling roles in curtailing these problems such as giving proper information on career related areas, self-management and positive thinking on events around them through cognitively restructuring their thoughts. The paper suggests among others that youths should positively engage themselves in activities that will occupy them by being involved in skills acquisition that will make them economically viable.

Introduction

Youth in Nigeria includes citizens of Federal Republic of Nigeria aged 18-35 years (National Youth Policy, 2009) variance in chronologies are used in defining youth and are addressed by members of the state in accordance to their particular society (Furlong, 2013). Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa with one of the largest populations of youth in the world comprising 33,652,424 members (CIA World Factbook, 2014). In 2012, using National Population commission Projections, Nigeria was said to have a population of 167million. Half of these were said to be youth in the age category of 15-34 years (Akande in Jega, 2017), this statistics suggest that 11 million youth were unemployed.

Going by the above statistics one could consider that this segment of the society requires attention and considerations to ascertain that they are contributing member of the society. From 1999-2007 the then President of Nigeria Chief Olusegun Obasanjo believes that identifying and addressing issues that enhance the lives of the youth would improve overall national development. He stated that youth constitute Nigeria's only hope for a real future. This is because they are characterized as ambitious, enthusiastic energetic and promising (National Youth Policy, 2009). Nigerian youth face tremendous challenges of poverty, diseases such as sexually transmitted diseases and HIV and AIDS, unemployment and marginalization and exclusion in the political economy (Jega, 2017). In addition are crime related issues such as robbery, restiveness, examination malpractice, kidnapping, theft and drug abuse.

Counselling as stressed by Oladele (1991) that it has been used to denote a wide range of procedures including advice giving, support in times of trouble of need, encouragement, information giving and test interpretation while Shobola (2011) defined counselling as constitution, discussion, deliberation, exchange of ideas and process of decision making. Considering the wide range of discomfort being experience by Nigerian youth it becomes inevitable that counselling is needed to heal the wounds they have been nursing. If the youths are sick then Nigeria is sick and requires healing too. This paper will address some of the aiding problems of the youth which are depriving them from contributing positively to their own development and the development of the country at large. Some of these problem related areas are youth and drug and substance abuse, youth and restiveness, youth and unemployment and youth and political participation.

Youth and Unemployment

Unemployment is a situation where people who fall within the ages of working population are unable to obtain a job. Ajala (1991) opined that unemployment is a condition of the labour market in which supply of labour power is greater than the number of jobs available.

Many of the youth graduating from various institutions to join the world of work are now turned sheer nightmares. Nigeria workforce is not expanding to cater for the teeming youth joining the labour force. This was revealed by National Bureau of Statistics (2014) that unemployment rate in Nigeria increased to 23.9% in 2011 as against 21.10% in 2010 it also

revealed that 54% of Nigeria youth were unemployed in 2012 and as a result of unemployment youth are prove to involvement in different type of crimes.

Considering that the youths are the heartbeat of any nation and in Nigeria, half of the population of the country are youth in addition it was revealed that up to 11 million youth are unemployment (Akande in Jega, 2017). This further made it clear of the status of youth in employment coupled with lack of job availability, there is lack of guidance and counselling especially in our secondary schools in preparation of students for career choice based of subjects chosen from the unset. Knowledge of career development and how young people can improve their transition from school to work make it clear that the new entrant into the labour market, the job seeker just out of school needs among other things as stressed by Okon (2001), Siddiqui (2008) the followings:

- i. A high degree of self-knowledge or understanding.
- ii. Knowledge of the world of work.
- iii. Knowledge of what he has to sell.
- iv. Knowledge of what he can do that employers will pay for.
- v. Knowledge of where people can do such things that are needed.
- vi. Knowledge of how he can apply a given type of job.

He further stated that unless students are taught these operations while they are in school and unless they are also taught how to make intelligent and wise decision about these operations, they are likely to make errors in assessing their opportunities and in deciding among alternatives.

Okon (2001) suggested that comprehensive career guidance programmes in secondary schools will encourage vocational exploration by students. Vocational exploration activities help to overcome the wide spread failure to plan thoroughly for one's career future guidance and counselling programmes are also needed in primary schools, colleges, polytechnics and universities. There in need for collaborative relationships with the government, parents, educators, counsellor, members of the community to face career guidance into the curriculum at all levels.

Another way of resolving the youth unemployment scourge is through entrepreneurship training in Technical Vocational Education Training, Akpan, Malami and Ruwandorowce (2016) further claim that traits are characteristics that give individual the potential to run a successful business. These traits which include creativity, nee to achieve, need for autonomy, intuition among others are the ingredients of good leadership and requirement for effectiveness in any vocational area. Youths can overcome the issue of unemployment by possessing the required skills in areas of their interest on jobs or occupation that will make them self-reliant.

Youth Restiveness

Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary (2015) defines the word restiveness from 'restive' which is 'unable' to say or unwilling to be controlled especially because you feel bored or not satisfied.

As earlier described that the youths are the most active segment of every society, they are full of energies and agile. The needs to be involved and be made adores in their domain. In a study conducted by Audu and Oliha (2015) they identified some of the major causes of youth restiveness to include political instability, frustration, religious crisis, unequal distribution of natural resources, poverty and hardship unemployment. Other causes are bad governance, illiteracy and ignorance, drug/alcohol abuse peer group/cult influences, ethnic/tribal crisis and ineffective communication from political leaders. While often and Ajayi (2008) asserted that lack of good governance, lack of humanitarian and social welfare, corrupt practices of government officials, inadequate training programmes, unemployment, inadequate recreational facilities, lack of quality education and so on as the reasons for incessant youth restiveness.

Nigeria has witnessed so many episodes of youth restiveness. A part from the militancy and restiveness by students who indulge in cultism on university campuses, outside the campuses are proliferated initiated pressure group or ethnic militia such as the Odua People's Congress (OPC) in the Western Nigeria, Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) in the Eastern Nigeria, Movement for Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) and Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta, Arewa, Constitutive Forum (ACF) in the North, Boko Haram in the Northern part of Nigeria (Usman, 2015). There are other groups springing across the country with similar characteristic like the major ones mentioned such as the recent herdsmen-farmers clashes in Plateau, Benue and Taraba, gun-men attack in Zamfara, Katsina and Sokoto States.

The consequences of this violence for the Nigerian state have been devastating. Orhero (2015) stated that the spate of violence in Nigeria is symptomatic of a failing state if not a failed state. A failed state is described as a state which is unable to perform the legitimate functions such as the maintenance of its territorial integrity, the security of its population, and property including the provision of basic public services to its citizen among others.

Going by the causes and consequences of youth restiveness it now becomes imperative that the government and communities involved and those yet to be involved to critically examine what is it that is not going well especially in relation to youths, so as to curtail or remove the stumbling block or blocks that is causing youths to be engaged in productive activities that will keep their minds occupied activities like seminars, workshops symposia, skill acquisition programmes and employment opportunities as well as ensuring that appropriate dissemination of information to all these programmes are accessible to them.

The entrepreneurship education introduced in schools and colleges, National Youth Service Corps and university should be made functional and practical oriented in such a way that the youths are occupied prepared and equipped with skills that they can access to earn a living.

Youth and Political Involvement

Youth are expected to be the active members of any political dispensation, but in Nigeria reverse in the case Jega (2017) asserts that there is dire shortage of young persons occupying political realm, either because of disempowerment, or alienation, or their perception that their involvement would not matter given how elections are rigged and how policies are haphazardly conceived and implemented without input from critical stakeholders (youths). He further stated that, there is a disjuncture between the old, the middle and the youth, in the sense of lack of appropriate and serious platforms for solidarity, engagement and dialogue. Instead, the youth are most found in political thuggery and violence, in addition those that claim to be their godfathers only support the with drugs and weapon to carry out violence on their behalf some of them would be wounded, killed or end up in prison while those that engaged them are presumably enjoying themselves. UNESCO in Jega (2017) stated that the goals of youth empowerment are to nurture in the youth, values, ideals and notable skills that will provide the youth with positive sense of self, self control, decision making skills, moral system of belief and pro-social connectiveness.

The aforementioned could only be achieved through hard work, government taking the lead way and other stakeholder providing critical support to create better opportunities for our young people so that they can explore their potentials in education, employment in entrepreneurship and especially in politics and governance and in global competitiveness as well as in all facets of life.

Youths and Drug/Substance Abuse

Drug is any substance which produces physical, mental or psychological changes in the user. Lar, Okpede and Bulus (1992) referred drug to as a chemical compound that may be used or administered to human beings or animals for treatment or prevention of diseases or other abnormal conditions for relief of pain. White drug abuse refers to any substance taken persistently and excessively over a long period of time can be dangerous of physical health and social being of the taker. Any drug that is taken without the doctor's prescription results into drug abuse.

Reasons why Youths Abuse Drugs

Nwachuku and Ekanem 2007 as follows:

- i. Family based factors: positive family history of alcohol or drug use, or drug dependence, dysfunctional parental style or parental loss of control permissiveness or authoritarianism, family conflicts, poor or loose family moral values tolerance or alcohol and cigarette use in the family.
- ii. Problem behaviours associated: Anti-sexual behaviours, aggressiveness early sexual experience, impulsivity negative affect and attention deficit disorder.

- iii. School based factors: Peers pressure, influence and validation or peer affirmation, early school failure delinquency and possible drop out.
- iv. Association with drug using peers.
- v. Community based factors:
 - a. Ready availability of alcohol and other drugs in the neighborhood.
 - b. Tolerance for the use of alcohol or illegal drugs
 - c. Overpopulated, disorganized and deteriorating rundown neighborhoods, squatter settlement and ghetto life.
 - d. High unemployment rates.
 - e. Social tolerance for low moral standards and social loitering.
 - f. Sex talk, sexual promiscuity and poor role modeling by adults in the community
 - g. Drug consumption provocative commercials. Promos and media advertisements

Edo-ololu stated that many of the root cause of drug and substance abuse are to be found in insecurity, fear, guilt, disappointments, immorality, and deviant sexual behavior, frustration, stress, peer pressures and intense competitions such as professional sports.

Some of the drugs and substances abused are from both licit and illicit drugs such as alcohol, marijuana, cocaine, codeine, cough syrups, valium, analgesic heroin cigarettes and snuff to mention but few. Use of drugs has become a habit associated with youth sub-culture and a vital ingredient for the rampant contemporary social and political violence the increasing number of young alcohols and drug users has risen to the level of causing the educational sector much concern. This problem according to Nwachku and Ekanem (2007) constitutes one of the greatest factors that hinder educational excellence in today's school.

There is dire need to take necessary measures in rescuing the youth from this menace. Nigeria cannot allow such huge number of its population to waste away. Youths constitute the major part of the workforce or labour force, if left unguided against the menace of drug and substance abuse, Nigeria will be losing young and vibrant personalities that will cater for all sphere of labour force. Drug abuse is highly dangerous as it destroy one physically, psychological and emotionally. The communities have a role to play by identifying places where these drugs are being supplied or sold as well as collaborating with security agents and personnel's of drug law enforcement in order to monitor and arrest people who deal with those drugs.

Role of Counselling

The role counselling is expected to perform in alleviating the suffering of the youth in the country can be deduced from the definition of counselling by Egbochukwu (2000) as a process by which a troubled person is helped to free and behave in a more personally

satisfying manner through interaction with an uninvolved person who provides information and reactions that stimulate the client to develop behaviours that enable him to deal more effectively with himself and his environment. Dustin and heorge in Egbochukwu (2008) also defined counselling as a learning process designed to increase adaptive behavior and to decrease maladaptive behavior. Sambo (2014 page 187-189) enumerated areas that counselling is needed to relieve the youth of their discomforts as it relates to this paper.

Youth need counselling in area of career: career counselling includes all aspects of individual needs as part of the total careers, decision making and planning. For a counselling assisting the individual with career issues demands that such individual be equipped with various techniques so as to be effective.

- i. Career information which facilitates the development of realistic expectations about an occupational roles. Counselling should accord the youth with information which will enable the individual to test out it congruency with his self-concept.
- ii. Career counselling strategies: There is need to employ strategies to help the person such strategies as assessment strategy enable the counsel find out the main areas of strength and weaknesses; intensive information and placement service strategy which can take the forms of career tour, career fair, practical
- iii. Career counselling techniques: In making the individual feel and to have experience during career counselling a number of techniques have to be used which are occupational drawing, bibhotherapy, guided fantasy, career teaching techniques and career exploration techniques such as visit, excursion and so on.

Role of Counselling in Drug Education

Counselors should provide the youth with drug education which should include the reasons for drug use as well as the social impact of drugs. As such change will be more lasting if young people are allowed to make their own decision about the use of drugs after learning about the harmful effects or such activity. There is need to concentrate resources and efforts on leading young people to alternative means of obtaining what weirs seek from drug way of satisfying their needs and wants that are better for them and the society.

Sambo (1991) stressed that drug education must foster and instill in youths the necessary skills for living. A positive approach to the study of drug use should include concepts such as personal values, relationship with others, self-image, one's responsibility to the society, ways of fulfilling needs and the means of a mentally, socially and physically healthful life.

Role of Counselling in Political Education.

Counselling has a role to play in getting the youth understand their plight on issues relating to their participation in politically motivated activities. Youth enlightenments are to be organized from time to time to instill in them attitudes, values and norms that are in conformity with the society in which they live. The youths need to be informed of the roles expected of them in moving the country forwards. They need to know their civic responsibility and loyalty to the country. Counsellor should let them understand qualities

required of them to be useful members of the society; such qualities as to be law abiding citizens, trust worthiness, service to humanity, peaceful coexistence, accept dialoguing as a means of resolving issues, none crave for money bag, hard work and perseverance. All these allow their inclusion in politics so that they will have a say in the governance of their country.

Counselling Role on Youth Restiveness

Having understood the causes of youth restiveness, the counsellor requires to organize seminars, workshops, group counselling and conferences on topical issues causing restiveness, so that youth would be part of discussion as well as avail them opportunity for assertiveness, that will help in guiding them appropriately using counselling strategies like brainstorming, cognitive restricting therapy, reality therapy and so on. The essence is to changing their negative thinking to more constructive ways of reason which will make them identify positive ways of contributing to the development of self and society.

Conclusion

Having identified that youths are the backbone of any society as well as their population and their contribution to the development of the nation cannot be over-emphasized. Furthermore, their engagement in crimes and other social ills stemmed from idleness, lack of involvement in sphere of life, unemployment, lack of proper information on the happenings that concern them such as skills acquisition programmes, political activities and job opportunities are some of the reasons why frustration envelope them. They also lack the knowledge of self and self-management which result in some of them taking solace on drugs and restiveness that are detrimental to their well-being. Through counselling interventions youths could be managed and guided in ways that will make them achieve good personality as well as making them being positive in their thinking and actions. This will heal the wounds they are nursing as well as healing for the country at large.

Recommendations/Suggestions

This paper forwards the following recommendations:

1. Federal Government of Nigeria should through National Youth Development Policy enlighten the youths properly on programmes that concern them through giving information that are within their reach for proper actions.
2. Youths should engage themselves in skill acquisition education to enable them possess skills that are relevant to their environment to curtail being idle as well as preparing them economically for living.
3. Counselling Association of Nigeria (CASSON) should create fora for interacting with youth organizations across the country, enlightening them on expectations and reality of their needs, interest and participations.
4. Counsellors should endeavor to create avenues where youths can reach them for counselling in relation to self-management and career guidance.
5. Those in governance should serve as role models to youths in terms of being trustworthy in handling the resources of the country. This will enable them realize that there is hope ahead.

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